

# **Quality of teaching and learning in resource quandary**

*The case of the University of Zimbabwe*

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# Abstract

Over the last decade, Zimbabwe has faced a severe economic quagmire which impacted on all spheres of life for both individuals and organizations. Universities were not spared either.

Resource accumulation and availability from the environment at the University of Zimbabwe became a major challenge leading to a decline of quality of teaching and learning. Resource Dependence Theory advocates that organizations (universities included) are dependent on the environment for resources for survival and achievement of their set objectives which includes the quality in teaching and learning. This study investigated the critical resource related factors that influenced quality of teaching and learning at the University of Zimbabwe.

A case study approach with University of Zimbabwe as the case was used to study the factors that influenced the quality of teaching and learning in all the ten faculties at the institution.

Ten department chairpersons and ten academics participated through interviews. Forty-five students participated through focus groups. Results of the study showed that resource related factors namely infrastructure, staff, materials, finance, management and students influenced the quality of teaching and learning at the University of Zimbabwe. Results of the study gave evidence of the value of sufficiency of resources for the University of Zimbabwe to achieve quality in its set objective in teaching and learning.



# **Dedications**

To all students and staff at the University of Zimbabwe without whose participation this study could not have been a success!



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# List of abbreviations and acronyms

HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
GNP	Gross National Product
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
MHTE	Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education
SDP	Staff Development Programmes
POSA	Public Order Security Act
RDT	Resource Dependence Theory
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UZ	University of Zimbabwe
ZCHE	Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education
ZINASU	Zimbabwe Students Union



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# **I. INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Aim of the study**

In a report on the ‘State of the Education Sector in Zimbabwe’, the Zimbabwe Students Union (ZINASU) (2010) alleged that there had been serious decline on the quality of education in HEIs including the University of Zimbabwe (UZ). In Zimbabwe, there existed a volatile macro-economic environment, which saw inflation ballooning to a record high of up five quintillion percent, meaning that government expenditure on HE might have fallen drastically in real terms. For instance by June 2006 (i.e. in half a year), about 75% of the 2006 annual budget allocation for higher education had been spent, which was \$75.4 million out of the \$81 million annual budget allocation (Parliament of Zimbabwe, 2006). Reflecting on the budgetary constraints in HE, the government mouthpiece The Sunday Mail (2009) newspaper reported that University of Zimbabwe was on the verge of collapse due to gross under-funding while grants from government had either not been released or were inadequate. The MHTE minister was said to have pointed out that US\$40 million that was allocated to HEIs in the 2010 national budget was insufficient and as such the quality of education was being compromised (The Herald, 2010). These reports were not empirically proven if they were anything to go by. The study aimed at investigating the critical resource related factors that influenced quality of teaching and learning at the University of Zimbabwe (UZ). The study aimed at identifying the critical resource related factors influenced quality of teaching and learning, analyze their relative importance or significance and discuss options that were available to the University of Zimbabwe.

## **1.2 Rationale and contribution of the study**

The study focused on resource related factors that influenced quality of teaching and learning while stressing their applicability to UZ’s circumstances. What constitutes quality varies from one higher education institution (HEI) to another and from country to country. The study added some empirical evidence on the constituents of quality at the University of Zimbabwe with respect to teaching and learning. The study investigated critical resource factors that influenced quality of teaching and learning concerning UZ hence enhancing the ability to guide other studies on a wider scale in HEIs in Zimbabwe and beyond.

Zimbabwe is a country that has been overwhelmed by economic malaise for a couple of years with record inflation. In a country that faced such a myriad of economic challenges, the study

added some empirical evidence of quality in teaching and learning at UZ in an almost broken down economy. The study revealed the contextualized perceptions of quality in teaching and learning at the UZ.

## 1.3 Research questions

Various factors influence the quality of teaching and learning in different universities. The factors vary from one university to another while connotations that may have been ascribed to any institution may not necessarily apply to another. The main research question for this study was therefore stated as:

- ***What are the resource related factors that critically influence the quality of teaching and learning at the University of Zimbabwe?***

Universities have some forms of resources that are available to realize goals that regard quality of teaching and learning. Sub-question 1 was therefore stated as:

- ***What resources are available to the University of Zimbabwe to maintain and/or enhance quality of teaching and learning?***

Governments influence HE particularly through resource allocation and regulation. The government of Zimbabwe is no exception. Sub-question 2 was therefore stated as:

- ***To what extent is the governmental regulatory framework influencing quality of teaching and learning at the University of Zimbabwe?***

Universities, unique as they may be, have their own ways to nurture and augment available resources in an effort to enhance and maintain quality in teaching and learning. Hence sub-question 3 was stated as:

- ***How does the University of Zimbabwe adapt to the current resource situation and regulatory framework?***

Universities may find themselves operating in environments characterized by scarcity of resources but alternatives may always be available to achieve quality in teaching and learning. Sub-question 4 was therefore stated as follows:

- ***What strategic options are available to University of Zimbabwe to acquire critical resources to improve the quality of teaching and learning?***

## 1.4 Organization of the thesis

The study was organized in seven chapters. *Chapter 1* outlined the aim, rationale and contribution of the study. The research questions were presented and briefly discussed in the same chapter.

In *Chapter 2*, the context of the study was discussed focusing on basic facts about Zimbabwe. In the same chapter, historical and current state of HE was outlined. The issue of funding in the HE system in Zimbabwe was also discussed. In addition to HE in Zimbabwe in general, focus was also put on the University of Zimbabwe which was the research site for the study. The chapter revealed the HE at the national and institutional levels in Zimbabwe. The UZ's administrative structure and state of HE were also outlined.

Presented in *Chapter 3* is the Resource Dependence Theory (TDT) which provided the analytical framework. Some literature on factors that influenced quality of teaching and learning in universities as well as previous researches were looked into taking cognizance of various authorities' perceptions, reflecting on the notions of the RDT in the process.

*Chapter 4* focused on the research methodology that was employed in the study whereby the research approach and design; procedures for data collection; population and sampling; method of data collection, instruments and procedures; pilot study; adaptation of validity and reliability; ethical considerations; and efforts to enhance quality in the study were looked into.

Data regarding factors that influenced quality of teaching and learning at UZ were presented in *Chapter 5*. Views, perceptions and experiences of the participants in the study were reflected upon in the same chapter.

In *Chapter 6*, data were discussed in relation to the major findings on factors that influenced quality in teaching and learning at UZ. The findings were discussed cognizant of the research questions that guided the study, previous researches, RDT and literature related to factors that influenced quality of teaching and learning.

In *Chapter 7*, the conclusion drawn from the study and relevant recommendations were presented with regards to the findings on the factors that influenced quality of teaching and learning at UZ.



## 2. BACKGROUND: CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

### 2.1 Facts about Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is a landlocked country that is located in the Southern Africa region. Zimbabwe covers an area of 390 245 square kilometres. English is the official language while Shona and Ndebele are the other widely spoken languages spoken by 80% and 19% of the 13.5 million people respectively. On Zimbabwe's borders is Botswana in the west, Zambia in the north, Mozambique in the east and South Africa in the south. Zimbabwe's geographical location is shown in Figure 1.



*Figure 1: Geographical location of Zimbabwe and its neighbouring countries*

Harare is the capital city of Zimbabwe and is home to nearly two million people (Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, 2005). Zimbabwe is still a developing country and belongs to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as well as other organizations like the African Union and United Nations.

Zimbabwe has experienced a downward spiral of the economy over the years. With records of serious economic quagmire characterised by record inflation and negative GDP growth rates (see Table 1). In 2009 Zimbabwe had a negative growth rate of -5.74% of annual GDP growth

against positive growths of 5% and 4.3% in the 1980s and 1990s respectively (Central Statistical Office, 2009). Official annual inflation rate rose from 32% in 1998, to 150 000% in 1998, to 5 billion percent in 2008. By November 2008, unofficial figures put annual inflation rate at 516 quintillion percent leading to the introduction of a Z\$100 trillion Zimbabwean banknote in January 2009. The inflationary environment resulted in negative economic growth rates only to realize positive growth in 2010. Statistics available on the trends of Real Growth Rates is given in Table 1 below:

Year	GDP - real growth rate
2003	-12.10%
2004	-13.60%
2005	-8.20%
2006	-7.70%
2007	-4.40%
2008	-5.50%
2009	-14.10%
2010	+3.70%

*Table 1: Zimbabwe's real growth rate from 2003 to 2010. Data source: Index Mundi (2010).*

The economic tailspin affected most facets of life to an extent that the Zimbabwean dollar was discarded in 2010 followed by an adoption of a multi-currency system in which the US dollar, the British pound and the South African rand as the main means to transact business. The country then realized a positive growth rate of +3.70% in 2010.

## 2.2 Higher Education (HE) in Zimbabwe

### 2.2.1 Conception of HE

HE denotes different meanings in various countries. In Zimbabwe HE refers to that education that is offered in universities and university colleges leading to degree awards. Thus studies at universities and university colleges are the only ways that lead to degree certification.

### 2.2.2 HEIs establishments

From 1952 until 1989 a single university in Zimbabwe existed, the University College of Salisbury (later known University of Rhodesia). From 1980 it became the University of Zimbabwe. Before the mushrooming of universities, Zimbabweans sought HE outside the country due to enrolment pressures at local HEIs. For thirty-seven years until 1980 UZ, remained the sole higher education institution (HEI) in the country. Reform trends in higher education are reflected in the number and types of higher institutions in a country (Johnstone,



1998). Thirty years after independence, Zimbabwe now has thirteen universities, nine public and four private as indicated in Table 2 below.

HE Institution	Year established	Responsible authority
1. University of Zimbabwe (UZ)	1957	State
2. National University of Science and Technology (NUST)	1991	State
3. Africa University	1992	United Methodist Church
4. Solusi University	1994	Seventh Day Adventist Church
5. Bindura University of Science Education	1996	State
6. Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU)	1999	State
7. Masvingo State University	1999	State
8. Midlands State University (MSU)	1999	State
9. Catholic University in Zimbabwe (CUZ)	1999	Catholic Church
10. Chinhoyi University of Technology (CUT)	2001	State
11. Women's University in Africa	2002	Board of Trustees
12. Lupane University	2004	State
13. Harare Institute of Technology (HIT)	2005	State

*Table 2: Existing HEIs in Zimbabwe, years of establishment and responsible authorities*

As is shown in Table 2, twelve universities were established within a decade while only one university existed over more than three decades that is the UZ. Presumably, the increase in the number of universities widened access to HE while there was relief on the enrolment pressure on UZ. Of the four private universities in Zimbabwe three are not for profit universities as they are church owned while only the Women's University in Africa (WUA) is a for-profit institution. WUA is owned by private entrepreneurs with a Board of Trustees responsible for the institution. Since the government plays the major role in the establishment of HEIs and provision of university education, the distribution of state universities is fairly apportioned across the country. Of the ten education provinces that exist in the country, only Mashonaland East and Mashonaland West Provinces have neither a public nor private university. These provinces were formally part of Harare province and geographically lie in the periphery of the capital, Harare, hence are well serviced by HEIs established within Harare Province.

### 2.2.3 Enrolment trends in HE

The establishment of universities led to an increase in enrolment in HE. Available data, that may be regarded as outdated, show that enrolment in HEIs increased in both public and private HEIs. Although it is hard to obtain the latest figures, available data show that enrolment increased from 11,784 to 33,334 in 1995 and 2001 respectively in public universities. In private universities enrolment rose from 568 to 1,419 in 1995 and 2001 respectively. Figure 2 details enrolment trends in public and private universities between 1995 and 2001.

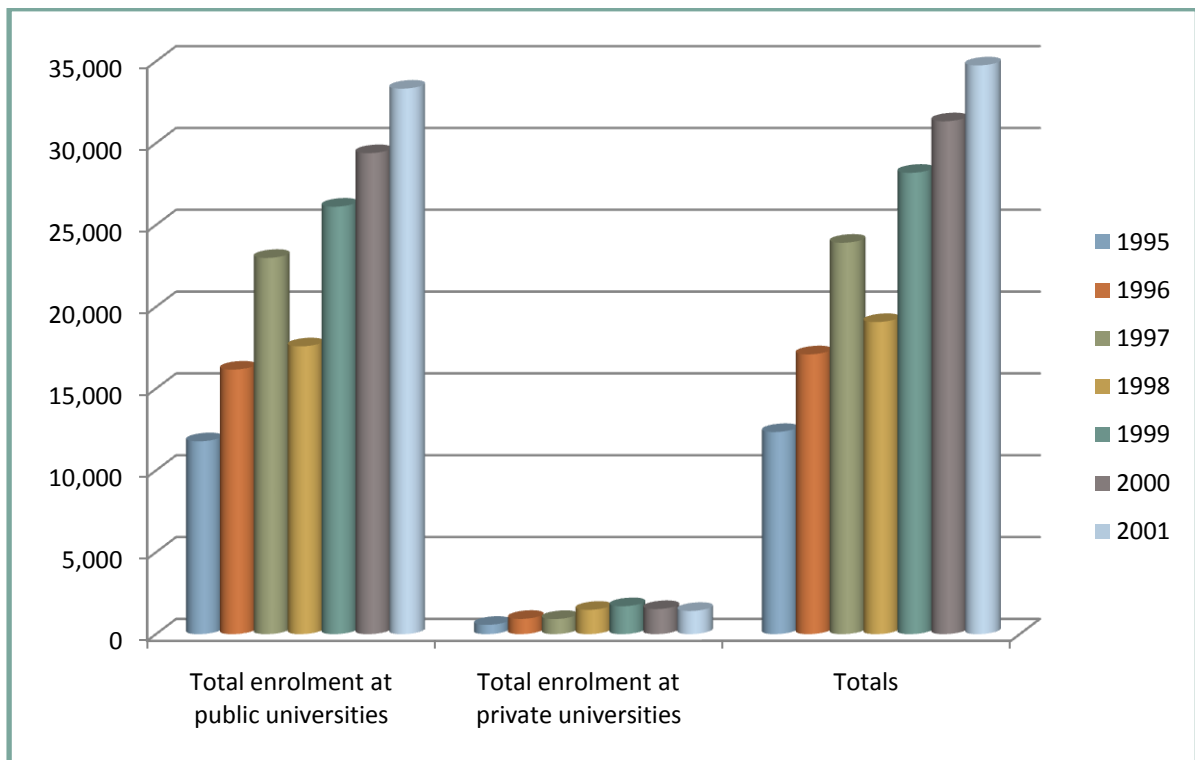
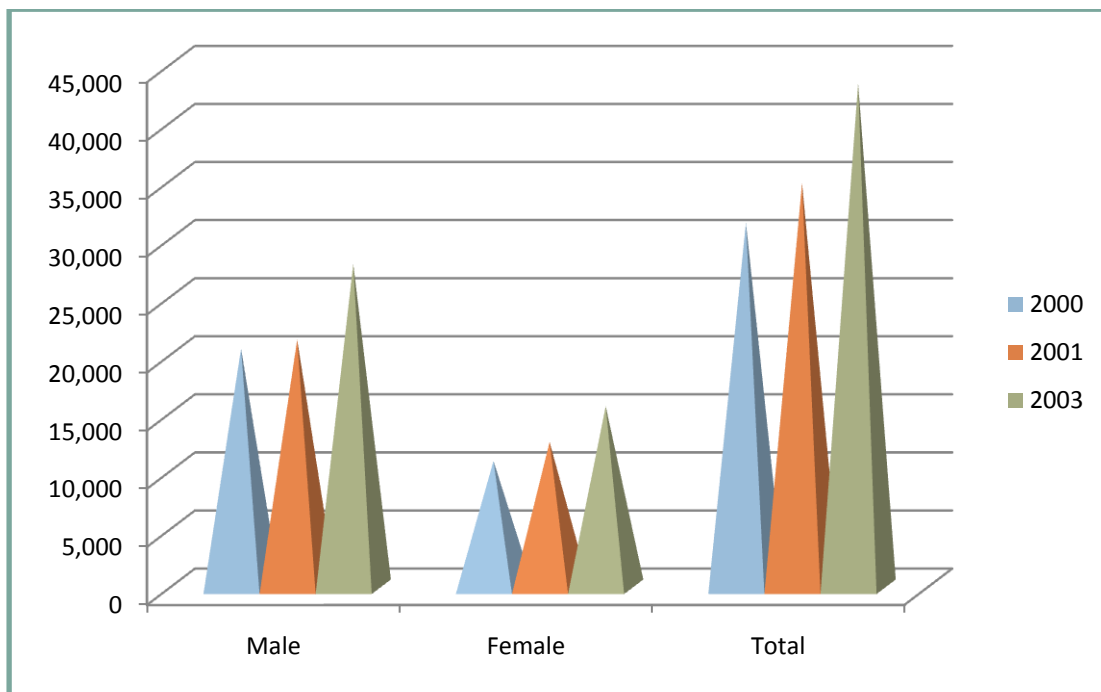


Figure 2: Enrolment trends in HE in Zimbabwe. Data source: Ministry of Higher Education (2003), Zimbabwe

As shown in Figure 2, public universities have enrolment pressures due to various reasons. For instance public universities charge lower tuition fees as compared to the private universities. The low tuition fees could be the cause for students who cannot afford to pay tuition fees at private universities to opt for the public ones. Enrolling in public universities makes students to qualify for cadetship. Cadetship is a programme through which students get the tuition fees they require provided they would have to work in the public sector for the same number of years of study they received state assistance after graduation. Thus cadetship

ultimately leads to bonding of the beneficiary for the same length of period graduates got financial support from the government.

There is also government's affirmative action policy with respect to gender only for enrolment in public universities. Where required entry points for male students who wish to enrol for some programmes may be as high as ten points, while females can enrol for the same programmes with as little as three points. This necessitated a rise of female students enrolment from 15% in 1985 to 32% in 2000 (The Zimbabwe National Commission for UNESCO, The Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture and the Ministry of Higher Education and Technology, 2004). Although data might be regarded as outdated (albeit giving some insight on trends of enrolment by gender), male students still dominated in enrolment between 2000 and 2003 as shown in Figure 3 below.



*Figure 3: Enrolment trends by gender in universities. Data source: The Zimbabwe National Commission for UNESCO, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture and the Ministry of Higher Education and Technology (2004)*

As is shown in Figure 3, male enrolment rose from 20,506 to 21,283 to 27,797 in 2000, 2001 and 2003 respectively while female enrolment rose from 10,833 to 12,470 to 15,550 within the same periods respectively. Total enrolment for both male and female students in universities showed a jump from 31,339 to 43,347 in 2000 and 2003 respectively. The above data may give a rough picture of the current enrolments in universities in Zimbabwe. With increased establishment of universities over the years, there may have been sharp rises in enrolments for both males and females in public and private universities. For some reasons

male students still dominate enrolments in universities. For instance the cultural belief that boys have to be more educated than girls is still deep-rooted in the Zimbabwean society. Apparently in a country embroiled in numerous economic challenges and deep cultural beliefs, many parents and guardians would probably prefer that boys enrol in universities than girls.

#### **2.2.4 Quality assurance in HE**

Stensaker (2007:106) citing Brunsson (2001) encouraged the establishment of ‘special organizations with the sole purpose of assuring, controlling or improving quality signals...’ In Zimbabwe, under the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZCHE) was established through an Act of Parliament and ‘to sustain and guarantee quality ... in university education by accrediting, monitoring and advancing quality at all universities in Zimbabwe’ (The Herald, 2009). The ZCHE also assesses and accredits HEIs. ZCHE oversees the maintenance of appropriate standards with regard to teaching, programmes, examinations and academic qualifications in HEIs. Other ZCHE mandates include visiting and inspecting HEIs as well as liaising with the government and HEIs on matters of policy and interest. ZCHE also acts as the adviser of the Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education on the establishment, maintenance and expansion of universities to avoid deterioration of quality of HE in Zimbabwe.

Indicators of quality of HE were partly comprised of alumni (Liu and Cheng, 2005; Dill, 2007). There have been many graduates from universities across the country. The Zimbabwe National Commission for UNESCO, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture and the Ministry of Higher Education and Technology (2004) and Mlambo (2005) indicated that alumni of HEIs in Zimbabwe rose from 1076 to 78481 in 1973 and 2003 respectively. Data that reveal the latest alumni trends are unavailable.

#### **2.2.5 Funding of HE**

In Zimbabwe public universities look up to the government for much of their funding. HEIs in Zimbabwe access their funding through the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education. The financial support includes that of staff remuneration and sustenance of the institutions. Amonoo-Neizer (1989) states that African governments spend a very insignificant portion of their GNP on HE. Available data (that may appear outdated) show that Zimbabwe has had a constant increase in the GNP percentage as indicated in Table 3.

Year	Education	Higher education
1996	8.21	0.52
1997	8.02	0.62
1998	6.68	1.55
1999	6.10	1.20

*Table 3: GNP percentage allocation for HE. Data source: The Central Statistics Office (1999).*

The government allocated 0.52% in 1996, 0.62% in 1997, and 1.55% in 1998 and falling slightly to 1.20% in 1999 of its GNP. Faced with economic quagmire over a considerable period of years now, the percentage allocations may look quite high but without value in real terms posing possible compromise on quality of teaching and learning inevitable. Budget allocations with some value may have been allocated in 2010 when the situation became different with the economy having been dollarized (also see Table 1). Universities in Zimbabwe charge tuition fees as an alternative source of income. Currently tuition fees range between US\$400 and US\$1200 per semester while the average income is US\$100 (International Organization for Migration / Council for Assisting Refugee Academics, 2010).

Previously students accessed grants and loans from the government to pay tuition fees for sustenance. With the economic downturn that has characterized the country over the years, grants and loans have since been scrapped. With existence of a hyperinflationary environment, bank loans became difficult to access or were worthless when one accessed them. Currently, students can access state assistance through the cadetship scheme.

## **2.3 The research site: University of Zimbabwe (UZ)**

‘In 1952 the Rhodesian University Association promoted a private bill in the Southern Rhodesian Legislative Assembly, which was enacted on 29 August, 1952, for the incorporation and constitution of the University’ (University of Zimbabwe, 2009). University College of Salisbury (thereafter named University of Rhodesia) was then established. The university was renamed University of Zimbabwe at independence in 1980. UZ was the only university in Zimbabwe until 1990 when the government began establishing more HEIs, both public and private.

UZ has ten faculties, namely Arts, Agriculture, Engineering, Commerce, Law, Science, Social Sciences, Education, Veterinary Science and Medicine. UZ helped to start new State Universities such as Chinhoyi University of Technology, Masvingo State University, Zimbabwe Open University and Bindura University of Science Education. UZ ‘has associate institutions which include teachers’ colleges, technical colleges, agricultural colleges, nursing colleges...’ (University of Zimbabwe, 2009).

The administrative hierarchy of UZ is comprised of the Chancellor (who automatically has to be the sitting State President of Zimbabwe), Vice Chancellor, Pro-Vice Chancellors, Registrar, Bursar, Director of Computer Centre, Librarian, Deans of Faculties, Heads of Institutions, Director of Information and Director of Human Resources and department chairpersons (University of Zimbabwe, 2009). The university council, through university senate and faculty boards, governs UZ. Foreign students are enrolled in all faculties. Majority of foreign students are enrolled in engineering, veterinary science, and medicine (State University, 2009). UZ selects teaching faculty through boards chaired by the vice-chancellor or pro-vice-chancellor, the dean, the deputy dean, and the chairperson of a department.

# 3. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The issue of ‘quality’ is a highly contested concept and largely remains a conundrum, leaving it highly exposed to contextualization as an option. What may be regarded as of high or poor quality in teaching and learning in one institution may not necessarily be regarded so in another thereby showing heterogeneity on how quality is perceived. In fact, different authorities put forward different perceptions of quality. This leaves the notion to be applicable to different contexts.

Ellis (1993:4) viewed ‘quality’ as meeting ‘standards that must be met to achieve specified purposes to the satisfaction of customers’. Stensaker (2007:99) citing Reeves & Bednar (1994:419) define quality as ‘value, conformance to requirements, fitness for use...meeting and/or exceeding customer expectations’. With the same notion are Harvey, Green and Burrows (1993) who view quality as ‘fitness of purpose’, ‘value for money’ while Nightingale and O’Neil (1994:8) regarded quality as ‘consistence or zero defects’.

For this study, quality in teaching and learning at UZ was regarded as the ability of the institution to achieve its set objectives, satisfying its stakeholders such as university department chairpersons, teachers and/or students. In the case of UZ, this perspective view of quality was not unilaterally considered in isolation. Quality in teaching and learning was also viewed as a product coalescence of factors such as availability of different resources. Hence the Resource Dependence Theory was ideal as an analytical tool for the study as the theory addresses reliance/dependency for UZ to realize its own objectives in quality in teaching and learning, as taking care of the expectations of stakeholders such as department chairpersons, teachers and students.

## 3.1 Resource Dependency Theory (RDT)

### 3.1.1 The core ideas of the RDT

To use the Resource Dependence Theory (RDT) in this study, only the financial, human or material resources were focused on. It was anticipated that quality of teaching and learning hinged on these factors in the case of UZ. The core ideas of the RDT with respect to the types of resources available are shown in Figure 4 below.

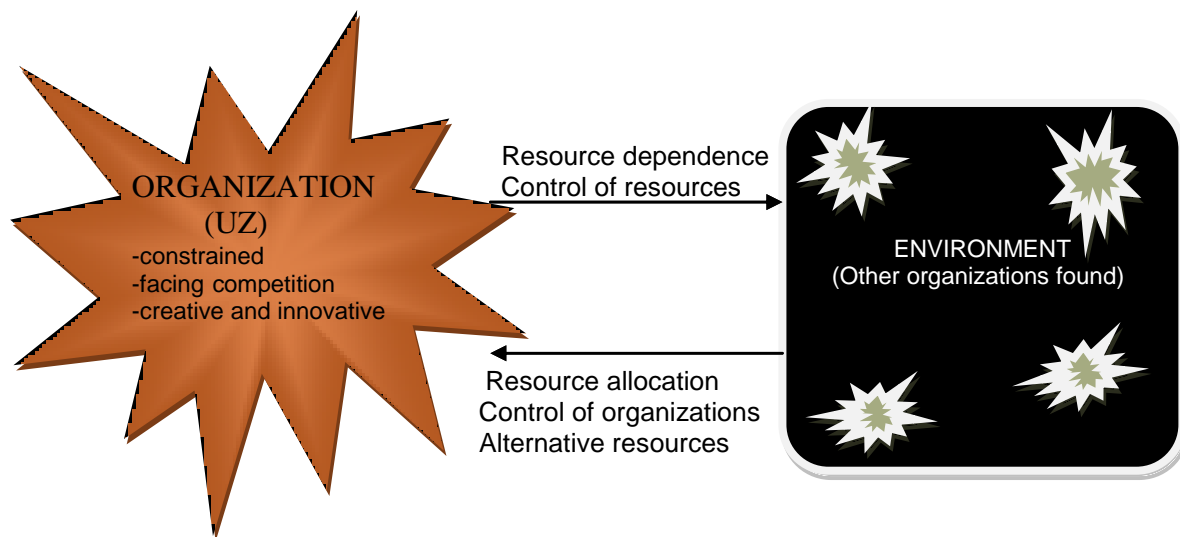


Figure 4: Summary of the ideas in RDT

In Figure 4 UZ was regarded just as one of the organizations that were found within the environment. UZ looked up to the environment for required resources while it lacked control of those resources. In the case of this study, as UZ was just one of the many dependent entities (universities) that existed in Zimbabwe. The universities often competed among themselves for the scarce resources for survival. Universities in Zimbabwe found themselves exposed to bitter scramble for the scarce resources due to the harsh environment that existed. Zimbabwe therefore presented an abnormal environment in which dependence became even tougher. In the case of UZ, resource accumulation became tougher in an environment characterized by economic doldrums.

RDT asserts that the environment provides the ‘critical’ resources that are needed for the survival of organizations such as universities (Davis & Cobb, 2010:24). Critical resources are those resources which if missed would endanger the ability of the organization to function (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). In the case of UZ, it had to acquire the needed resources such as adequate academic staff, materials and financial support to realize quality in teaching and learning. These could be just a few of the critical resources but that likely exposed UZ to intense competition to acquire them. RDT asserts that in many instances organizations often face constraints particularly when required resources are critical as they compete with other organizations.

Prevalence of a challenging environment may bring up the RDT assumption that resources can be a basis of power as those who are relied upon for resource supply or control tend to influence organizations (also see Figure 4). In the case of UZ, Zimbabwe government plays a major role to ensure that the institution survives for instance through budgetary support and



regulation. The government may influence through demanding accountability of resources supplied and monitoring bodies such as ZCHE. Thus RDT justifies interconnectedness of power and supplying resource.

RDT prescribes that organizations have strategies of seeking ‘to manage their environments’ in their attempt to accumulate the resources that they need for survival (Davis & Cobb, 2010:24) through means of minimizing environmental dependences in order to achieve their set objectives. This means organizations attempt to control the environmental turbulences by seeking alternatives. Instead of looking up to the traditional sources of resources, RDT assumes that organizations can be creative and innovative and seek for alternatives. UZ may find suitable alternatives such as donor support due to the prevailing difficult economic and political situation.

### **3.1.2 Relevance of RDT to this study**

While the RDT was derived from a different geographical location with a unique relationship between organizations and the environment in terms of resource supply, the theory remained applicable to UZ. While UZ exist in a highly uncertain environment characterized by numerous challenges, the institution still accessed some resources irrespective of their quality and quantity. Those resources no matter how meagre they were, they kept the institution going hence the relevance of RDT to the study.

Since RDT explains how organizations attempt to reduce environmental dependence and uncertainty. The theory therefore emphasized the need for options for UZ to acquire needed resources. RDT highlighted the need for UZ to discard sole reliance on traditional resource suppliers and hence became quite relevant to this study. The theory gives advice on how organizations can minimize uncertainty due to environmental constraints through finding or maintaining alternatives, RDT therefore provided tips on survival tactics for organizations. For UZ, RDT highlighted the need for the institution to adapt to a new situation. To some extent the theory empowers institutions such as UZ on how they can achieve their set goals such as those which regard quality of teaching and learning through seeking various options.

### **3.1.3 The flaws of RDT to this study**

Although RDT was perceived relevant as an analytical tool for the study, it was inapplicable in its entirety. RDT would apply to some situations as external factors were more salient. A major issue would be whether human and material resources that RDT would be the only determinants of quality in teaching and learning. Thus RDT disregarded other resources that may enable organizations to achieve their set objectives. Other factors such as those that are culturally related come to mind. These were disregarded by the RDT yet they can influence organizations despite the availability of external resources. In the case of a university, there can be adequate external resource support but if there exists a cultural lackadaisical approach to teaching and learning by students and staff, quality may not be realized. Thus external resource support alone would not guarantee quality of teaching and learning.

In the RDT, Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) suggest mergers of organizations as one of the alternatives in situations where organizations face resource turbulences. This is an idea that is usually typical of the industrial sector and it would not necessarily be applied to university institutions to curb challenges. In the case of Zimbabwe, mergers are still uncommon among universities. To an extent such practical advice of mergers would not necessarily be applicable to the universities in the face of constraints in the case of UZ. In any case university mergers in resource crisis situation would probably compound the challenges.

## **3.2 Factors that influence quality of teaching and learning: Reflections on RDT, related literature and previous researches**

Staff, infrastructure, management, materials, finance, management, and students are some of the resources that may influence the quality of teaching and learning in a university. These factors are not exhaustive but can be pillars of quality in teaching and learning in a Zimbabwean context. They may not be equally critical to enhance quality of teaching and learning as some may be more important. However, the factors were directly/indirectly addressed in the Resource Dependence Theory (RDT). At the same time RDT suggested that organizations seek options to reduce resource dependencies.

### 3.2.1 Staff

No university can achieve success without a well-qualified, committed academic profession such as the achievement of quality in teaching and learning (Altbach, 2009). Teachers therefore play a critical role in ensuring that there is quality of teaching and learning in the university and if missed can even endanger the ability of the organization such as UZ to function well (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). To this regard the RDT's emphasizes on the importance 'ranging from who to hire' (Salancik, 1979 in Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003: xii). University teachers need to be sufficient enough to carry the workload demand of the institution. Quality may suffer due to increased pressure of work when they teach bloated classes which at the end of the day will negatively affect the desired results – quality enhanced teaching and learning. Therefore teacher student ratios have to be reasonable. University teachers also need to be capable of having the job done through acquiring appropriate qualifications. Additionally the teaching staff also requires appropriate deployment, meaning that they have to be assigned to teach in areas of their competences. Deployment of teachers to areas they are incompetent in and unfamiliar with may lead to failure to sustain and enhance quality teaching and learning and this may further enhance poor contribution to quality in the process. Having enough university teachers may be a huge challenge in the case of the University of Zimbabwe in the face of crumbling economic situation that has characterized the country over the years. Many people may lack the drive to take up the academic profession. But the university would still have to use available human resources such as assistant lecturers.

RDT stresses the need for 'motivation of those running the organization to ensure the organization's survival' (Davis & Cobb, 2010:26). It is entirely understandable that when academics become unhappy with working conditions, they may seek for greener pastures leaving universities caught in the web of brain drain. Brain drain can be an impediment of quality in teaching and learning as a void is left by the departing academics. Manyukwe (2008) found out that there was mass exodus of academics in Zimbabwe due to plummeting standards while there was a critical shortage of qualified staff throughout universities in SADC due to poor working conditions. In another research with similar results, McGregor (2009) found that in most developing countries there was insufficient qualified staff in universities. Enders (2007) observed that there are few full-time academic appointments in many countries while Clark (2004) noted that there are decreased numbers of individuals who answer to the call to join the academic professionals leading to increased pressure of work as

the few academics take up assignments that could be taken by others. Also SADC (2010) noted that SADC is battling to stem the flight of highly skilled professionals to the developed countries.

Enders (2007:16) noted that ‘improving the working conditions (including remuneration) in the universities may help stem brain drain trends and possible frustrations. Enders (2007:14) asserted that ‘salary levels and other issues related to remuneration have an impact on the academic profession’. Therefore improvement of the academics’ working conditions must remain high on the priority list of universities, including at UZ. As the ‘academic profession seems to have suffered a more rapid status loss than in the past... the professoriate is seen as having lost its high rank in reputation among various professions, relative losses of income are reported’ in many countries (Enders, 2001). Even at UZ, the status of the academic staff must be upheld through creating conducive working conditions among other actions.

At UZ it would be a great challenge to ensure that there were improved working conditions for the academics due to the unstable economic environment. In spite of the challenges, university teachers need to be paid wages that are commensurate with their qualifications and equal in value to their counterparts at least in the region or they may leave in droves. Where this lacks, some teachers may seek supplementary part-time contracts so as to augment their salaries. Low levels of remuneration for the academe may push some academe into taking second jobs, thereby making them less available to students’ and with little time to think and develop their teaching (Bloom & Rosovsky, 2007; Ashwin, 2006). This may divert their attention to the primary role such as that of teaching in the institutions (Marquis, 2002). Some academe may find moving into the diaspora irresistible when they work under difficult conditions. Such movement may compromise the quality of teaching and learning at former host institutions after academics move elsewhere. Improved working conditions may curb such a trend for instance through reducing resource allocation from less crucial areas. This can be justifiable as many students particularly in rural schools still do well at least with good teachers. In some instances the governments frustrate such efforts by directing use of funds in the university while remuneration may be controlled.

The burden for the academics can be lessened by manageable enrolments in the university which in turn can enhance quality in teaching and learning. Teacher student ratios have to be manageable as persons need to do tasks with few constraints (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003) yet quite often governments may determine enrolments targets. Over-enrolment as well as

overcrowding can compromise the quality of teaching and learning. These have the potential of making interaction between teachers and students difficult. A study by Bloom, Canning and Chan (2005) revealed that classrooms in HEIs in Mauritania were generally overcrowded. Such a situation may provide a recipe for difficult interaction between students and teachers which may ultimately retard the quality in teaching and learning.

### **3.2.2 Materials**

For a university to realize quality in teaching and learning, availability of materials is vital. UZ would need to ensure the availability of resources such as adequate and recent library books for the support of teaching and learning. Teachers need teaching resources such as projectors to carry out their teaching duties despite a difficult economic environment in the country. The teaching and learning resources need to be adequate and appropriate for each programme offered. While RDT postulates that organizations are dependent on resources which include materials from the environment (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003: xii) it may be difficult to obtain the required resources. Most of the materials may require intensive funding which may not be available particularly in countries in economic predicament such as Zimbabwe. In the case of Africa and Asia, The World Bank (2000) noted that only eighty percent of their budgets are allocated to personnel and students' maintenance costs, leaving very little for material resources. Although there was a steady rise in budgetary allocation to HE in Zimbabwe (see Table 3), that did not guarantee adequate procurement of materials to enhance the quality in teaching and learning due to hyperinflation in the country.

With the prevalence of a challenging environment, UZ had the option to use the technological advancement to fill up the gap for material shortages. One would justifiably view such an option as unviable since funding would still play a major role. However, donor participation in this regard would be vital. UZ could turn to donors in the absence of adequate budgetary support. Alternatively, even discarded computers would fill up the gap as information sources through internet. The web has become an important source of information to enhance quality in both teaching and learning. 'Information and communication technologies have the potential to facilitate communication among students, teachers, and researchers, and by easing their access to quality educational materials' (Bloom & Rosovsky, 2007:449). The new technologies that have certainly brought a new information revolution may also increase knowledge and understanding while the best lecturers and lectures can be gotten on the Web (Laurillard, 2000). Practically such technologies may complement the traditional ways of

teaching and learning. UZ would therefore desperately need to ensure that computers are available in the institution matching the numbers of both students and teachers. It has to be noted that the government may not be quite keen to encourage universities to opt for the internet as an alternative information source. The internet can be viewed as capable to incite radical notions in the population hence its development may be suppressed.

Despite the importance of ICT, research by Skilbeck (2001) on major challenges HE systems in the ICT era faced in Ireland, results revealed noticeable difficulty to shift from the traditional and formal institutional type of teaching to technology facilitated learning. The same study advised universities to be open and flexible in their approaches to teaching and learning through welcoming ICT as complementary. Ignoring ICT may mean negating the existence of new approaches to teaching and learning and missing opportunities that can enhance quality in teaching and learning. A study in the SADC region showed that universities continued to experience constraints and gaps in their ICT infrastructure (McGregor, 2009). This could impact negatively on access to information that could enhance quality in teaching and learning as some teachers and students may not be able to access the computers.

It should be noted that there are challenges that may accompany the procurement and use of information sources such as ICT. The net benefits of technology should not be overstated as it comes with it other inputs such as appropriate hardware and software through which universities may incur a lot of costs. The World Bank (2000:25) revealed that there was a lot of scientific equipment that could not be used for want of supplies and parts. Also, development and maintenance of infrastructure if not attended to could lead to some surfeits of low-quality of teaching and learning in the university. Thus although 'many of the problems involving higher education are rooted in a lack of resources' (World Bank, 2000:25), others are rooted in maintaining the supplied resources reflecting the turbulence of the environment (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003). UZ may not be spared from failure to maintain ICT so that the institution gets optimal benefits through the enhancement of quality in teaching and learning.

### **3.2.3 Students**

Calibre of students that UZ enrolls matters just as 'who to hire' (Salancik, 1979 in Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003:xii) as one of the central tenets of the RDT. A university needs a recruitment strategy for quality students as there may be a strong nexus between quality in teaching and

learning. Quite often the state influences the admission policy of a university thereby contributing to the calibre of students that are finally enrolled and who, eventually, contribute to quality of teaching and learning. Quality of teaching and learning may be compromised if a university enrolls unqualified or under qualified students. Critical in enrolment issues is whether a university is free to select students who are qualified and well prepared for HE. UZ would need to scrutinize the quality of new entrants as these are some of the ultimate participants in quality of teaching and learning. For this study, UZ students would need to meet the enrolment requirements of programmes they wish to enrol in. Therefore benchmarks are needed in terms of required points to enrol into UZ programmes. Under-qualified and unprepared students may fail to meet the demands of the study programmes. A survey by Dell (2009) in South Africa revealed that universities were faced with a situation in which they enrolled underprepared students due to poor pass rates particularly in science subjects in high schools. In such situations disciplines such as engineering, medicine and physics may end up enrolling under qualified students who may eventually fail to perform as expected thereby compromising quality. Alternatively, there can be possible over-enrolment in disciplines such as humanities and social sciences where most students would qualify for enrolment in large numbers. That may lead to unmanageable student teacher ratios. In both circumstances, underprepared students and over-enrolment of students may compromise quality in teaching and learning.

In circumstances where unprepared students are enrolled into university, to improve quality in teaching and learning, some academically oriented remedial intervention such as intensive preparatory programmes may be necessary for the academically unprepared students (World Bank, 2000). Unfortunately in some circumstances, such programmes may be hampered in circumstances where a university faces resource shortages such as qualified teachers and unprecedented high teacher student ratio rendering any form of remedial action almost impossible.

### **3.2.4 Infrastructure**

Quality of teaching and learning can be compromised where inappropriate infrastructure exists. Conducive infrastructures are therefore a prerequisite for enhanced quality in teaching and learning. In fact, as RDT assumes, infrastructure is one of the critical resources, which if missed, could paralyze the operations of an organization. Classroom spaces have to be enough to avoid hitches such as congestion and classroom clashes. With growing demand for HE in

most countries including Zimbabwe (see Figure 3 for enrolment trends), larger teacher student ratios may require more classroom space lest the few that may be available are congested like in Mauritania where HEIs were generally overcrowded (Bloom, Canning & Chan, 2005).

Crowded classrooms may complicate interaction between students and teachers with quality of teaching and learning likely to be diminished. Results of a study on the impact of adequate classroom by Duncanson, Volpe and Achilles (2009) found classrooms enhance organization and opportunities for student learning. Universities would have to ensure that they construct more classrooms to accommodate the enrolled students. In some circumstances, renting some buildings and establishing campuses can be an ideal option. Government buildings may be some of the best alternatives to reduce rental charges.

Well maintained and renovated infrastructure may contribute to the enhancement of quality in teaching and learning cannot be underestimated. Available infrastructure need to be maintained for them to be conducive for teaching and learning. Buildings in dilapidating conditions may have negative impact on quality of teaching and learning. World Bank (2000:25) noted that in most developing countries, some universities are ‘littered with deteriorating buildings.’ Such buildings may be hazardous to users while dirty and dusty ones may equally be a cause for concern to users’ health. Infrastructure may also require installation of sufficient electricity and telecommunications since on these much of the global technologies rely to enable information sharing (World Bank, 2002).

In many institutions in Zimbabwe including in HEIs, electricity is seldom available due to load shedding on a daily basis. This may be detrimental to the enhancement of quality of teaching and learning as it may hinder the use of equipment such as computers and projectors. In a country such as Zimbabwe that has faced by a myriad of economic challenges over the years, construction or maintenance of physical infrastructures could be regarded as one the unaffordable luxuries when the nation usually faces more urgent issues such as food shortages. Equally important are matters regarding quality of teaching and learning.

### **3.2.5 Management**

The calibre of the management of a university is a factor that may influence quality of teaching and learning as it plays a crucial role. RDT stresses the need for high quality leadership in the organizational structures as those who occupy critical organizational positions and their backgrounds are important (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). This means individuals that are hired for management positions are important as they can make the boat



sink or sail. In the case of UZ the posts of vice chancellor, pro-vice chancellors and department chairpersons must be qualified academic leaders who are capable of being coordinators, coalition builders, and entrepreneurs (Askling and Stensaker, 2002).

It is management that ensures the success in teaching and learning as they instigate change and direct the institution towards the achievement of set goals as well as quality enhancement. University management must be comprised of individuals who can forge a system that evaluates and assesses itself for improvement. The university management that should be able to facilitate self-evaluation to ‘promote a sense of institutional responsibility by allowing teachers and administrators, with student inputs, to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses and propose corrective actions in the form of a plan for institutional self-improvement’ (Steier, 2003:160). Management must therefore be able to establish the appropriate link between the administrative staff and the teaching staff. Unfortunately, noticeable among many universities is failure to ‘devolve responsibility for decision making to constituent departments’ (Newton, 2002). Some university managers decide to have all powers centralized in them and are uncomfortable with any form of delegation.

RDT emphasizes that an effective university management must be able to make efforts to tap other alternative sources of resource support to enhance the quality in teaching and learning. It is incumbent upon the management that it must be able to foster cooperation of the university with the corporate world, other universities and the outside world to ensure the flow of the needed resources for the university to remain afloat. Therefore although the university management alone may find it difficult to achieve set goals, its role cannot be contested as ‘leaders made a difference in organizational performance’ (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003: xi).

Management can have all the necessary rudiments but still be compromised where political instability exists in a country. Allegations of the UZ management taking some political party positions to make decisions may be regretted but cannot be condoned. Management has to respond as they sense the environment. Political meddling would be inevitable in the appointment and behaviour of individuals in positions of authority at UZ where political polarization is rife in the country. Under such circumstances political parties may prefer people that embrace their political thinking to lead the university even at the expense of quality of teaching and learning. It is, however, imperative that the state abstains from meddling into the appointment of university management as well as the usual operations of the institution. It is the duty of the state to ensure that HEIs are run in a professional manner

in order to achieve their set goals as well as HEIs to have quality in teaching and learning. The state may assist in the establishment of efficient and effective HEIs through the parent ministry and regulatory bodies in the country while the introduction of performance related personnel management can be opted for. Performance of the university management and ability to achieve goals must be emphasized.

### **3.2.6 Finance**

Factors that influence the quality of teaching and learning may hinge on adequate financial support of HEIs. As RDT assumes that organizations rely on external sources to obtain the needed resources (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003), so do universities particularly in Zimbabwe, especially with regards to financing. Universities rely on the state for their budgetary support through the line ministry of HE while traditionally universities have been seen within a province of the state that has responsibility for funding them (Forest & Altbach, 2006). UZ requires adequate funding for it to realize quality in teaching and learning. But currently UZ may anticipate very little from the state due to the existence of a failing economy and a decline in available public (taxpayer-based) revenue. This is due to shrinking economy (Johnstone, 2003) among other reasons. In the prevailing circumstance in Zimbabwe, resource acquisition can be problematic and uncertain (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003). It can be appreciated that the state should devote more funding to HE for UZ to realize quality in teaching and learning once it attains the capacity to do so.

Due to the problems and uncertainty in resource acquisition, universities attempt to negotiate their positions within their constraints and think of strategies to overcome them (Pfeffer, 1972 in Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). While those who control the resources may become undependable and unreliable, wider thinking is necessary particularly in situations where the resources are scarce. Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) give fundraising as an important option for non-profit making organizations such as UZ that are more reliant on private donations and other unreliable sources. Organizations have to be creative to reduce resource dependencies. Some alumni support may assist the university with funding and other required resources. RDT goes on to advocate for entrepreneurship by organizations. In the case of UZ, the institution could seize the opportunity in the current land reform programme to acquire additional land for agricultural purposes in addition to carrying out research activities. Fahlen et al (2000) in Stensaker (2007) propound the creation and improvement of links between HE and industry through which universities may tap the

required material resources in the face of challenges in budgetary support. Links with the corporate world may alleviate some difficult situations particularly through research activities.

Another option available could be for universities to turn to tuition fees to augment dwindling or totally unavailable financial resources. The tuition fees could be justified as ‘those who benefit should at least share in the costs’ (Johnstone, 2003:4) while costs of higher education should be shared between the taxpayer and recipient through cost sharing (Eicher & Chevailier, 2002). Thus tuition fees may be some sort of cost sharing (Pillay, 2008:127) since that may potentially reduce resource constraints. It is justifiable to pay some tuition fees particularly in Zimbabwe where the economy has been shrinking provided tuition fee levels remain affordable. Considering that in Zimbabwe the GDP has steeply declined, the implication may be that become very low, it may imply that tuition fees could become unaffordable which may in turn be counterproductive.

Charging tuition fees may bring up other challenges such as dropouts, possibly leading to increased unemployment rate as the dropouts join the unemployment bandwagon. HE though, increases chances of employment and rate of return through higher wages after attaining university degrees (Branson, Leibbrandt & Zuze, 2009). Higher tuition fees may also lead to bottlenecks in enrolment where only those with rich economic backgrounds may end up enrolling on the basis of their ability to pay. Some students with tuition fees arrears may be denied the right to attend lectures, usually a common phenomenon in many universities including the UZ. Due to economic turmoil in Zimbabwe most students may struggle to pay tuition fees which can be beyond their reach. This may in turn lead to possible enrolment of under-qualified but economically sound students. At times the state can regulate the tuition fees that universities could charge for political mileage. High tuition fees may give rise to the unpopularity of a sitting government hence some form of control may be inevitable. In a research carried out by the Zimbabwe National Students Union president Katema (2009) on student enrolment in universities in Zimbabwe in 2006, 31.5% of the students in HE were forced to cancel their studies due to astronomical fees charged by HEIs. An alternative to this can be for universities to charge low tuition fees while they widen the age cohort of their students to also target the adult group thereby increasing the resource base by tapping the wider student population (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003).

Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) encourage entrepreneurship to augment required resources for an organization like UZ. Some UZ departments can raise resources at their levels because ‘power of a department in an organization is a function of the amount of important resources contributed by the department’ (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003:45). Departments can seek their own assistance from the donor community. Various departments at UZ can also establish cooperation with departments in other universities within the region and within the international community as these could also be sources of needed resources. Philanthropists are the other sources that are capable of assisting UZ to acquire the needed resources. During this period when resources are generally falling across the globe, the unpredictability of resources cannot be dismissed hence UZ has to become more innovative.

Factors that can influence quality of teaching and learning can be summarized in Figure 4. In the case of UZ, the factors and options in Figure 5 may not all be of equal importance or critical to the institution to enhance and/or maintain quality in teaching and learning.

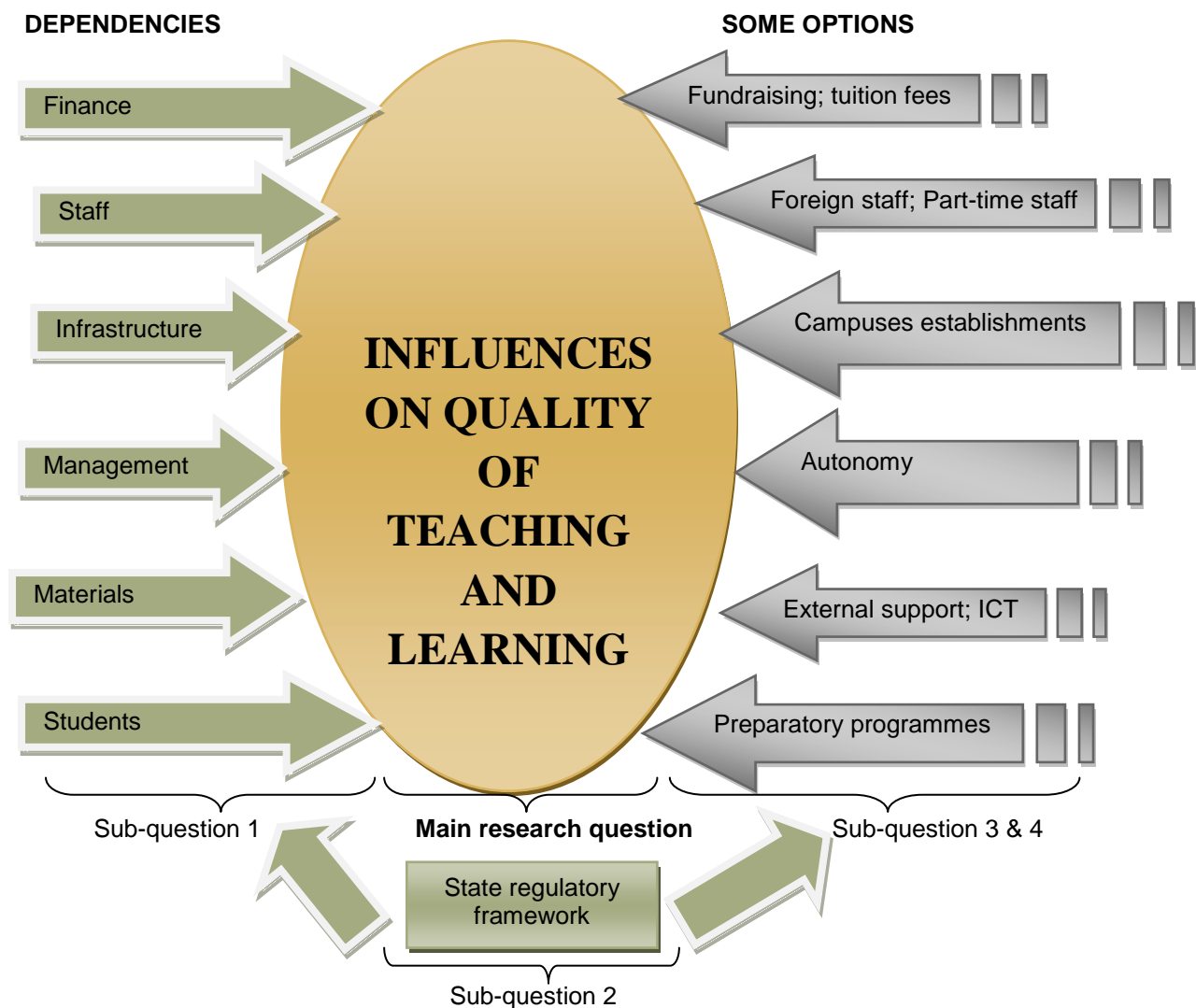


Figure 5: Overview of factors that may influence quality of teaching and learning in a university and possible options.

### 3.3 Expectations

While the RDT asserts that the environment provides the critical resources, it was expected that there would be numerous resource related challenges at the UZ. Zimbabwe is a country that was bedevilled by economic challenges at the time of this study. It would be expected that there were challenges at the UZ were in the availability of material, human and financial resources. Due to economic challenges in the country, financial challenges were expected at the UZ. It was expected that the UZ inadequate academic staff complement due to the economic challenges Zimbabwe faced. Inadequate material resources that could enhance the quality of teaching and learning would be expected. Procuring them would be difficult in a

country that was in economic difficulties. Physical infrastructures would be expected to be adequate but with challenges to maintain them.

The RDT prescribes the motivation of members that are hired by an organization. It was expected that some the academic staff employed at the UZ would be demoralized. Lack of adequate teaching and learning resources would have a negative impact on their commitment to teaching and learning. It was expected that the students would be committed to HE as this enabled them to enhance their employment opportunities after graduating. It would still be expected that UZ enrolled students who qualified for the different programmes the institution offered.

Regarding the leadership of the UZ that occupied critical organizational positions as RDT prescribes, it was expected UZ management exercised independence in promoting the tenets of quality teaching and learning without external meddling. It was anticipated that the management shrugged any external interferences.

While a study by Bloom, Canning and Chan (2005) revealed that HEIs in Mauritania were overcrowded, this was not expected at the UZ because a lot of universities had been established in the country in recent years. In fact the UZ could be encountering problems to attract enough students at the institution due to intense competition for students with other universities.

As the RDT prescribes it was expected that UZ sought options to alleviate the resource availability at the institution such as through some forms of entrepreneurship and increase in tuition fees.

## 4. METHODOLOGY

This research focused on resource related factors that critically influenced the quality of teaching and learning at UZ. The methodology that was employed in the study specifically focused on research design; population and sampling; methods of collecting data, instruments and procedures in data collection; pilot study; data analysis; ethical considerations; efforts to enhance quality in the study; field work challenges and how they were overcome.

### 4.1 Research approach and design

A qualitative approach was used in this study. The preference of the qualitative approach meant required going into the field or the real world of organizations such as UZ. That provided a chance to get close enough to the people and circumstances to capture what was happening (Patton, 2002) in connection with resource related factors that critically influenced quality of teaching and learning. Due to its main features, qualitative research was opted for. It ‘usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data’, (Bryman, 2004:266) while it enables an in-depth understanding of human behaviour (Lofland, 1984). It is interpretivist (that is it puts emphasis on ways individuals interpret their social world while it focuses on understanding of how social order is created through talk and interaction); it is concerned with subjectivity and the inside experience, and is deductivist (that is the theory is more of an outcome than a driver of research as it emphasizes the generation of theories) (Bryman, 2004).

Qualitative approach assisted in the investigation of how some UZ stakeholders (chairpersons, teachers and students) reflected on quality of teaching and learning and how they practically experienced them. It was strongly felt that quality issues could strongly be expressed in words rather than any form of quantification. Chairpersons of departments, teachers and students expressed their perceptions and feelings towards quality of teaching and learning at UZ by means of words hence a qualitative approach was employed. While quality globally remains a contextual phenomenon, this study focused on how quality issues in teaching and learning were perceived and experienced at UZ. UZ as a unique HEI, a qualitative approach enabled the unearthing of resource related factors that were perceived as critically influencing quality of teaching and learning at the institution as chairpersons, teachers and students perceived and experienced them. That means the perceptions of teaching and learning were interpreted from the perspectives of the participants. Participants gave their own reflections which is one of the

strength of the qualitative approach. Thus participants presented their “emic views” of chairpersons’, teachers’ and students’ perspectives while empathizing with them in the process.

A case study design was employed, which is ‘an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context’ (Yin, 2003: 13) while it ‘entails the detailed analysis of a single case’ (Bryman, 2004). The case study design enabled the study of the phenomenon, quality of teaching and learning in depth and in its real contextual situation, UZ. Additionally, it was ideal to focus on a single case given the short time-frame to carry out the study and while it was also a way of cutting costs of the study. Also, the UZ was an interesting case given several issues related to the quality of HE that were raised about it as well as the personal interest in the institution as part of the alumni.

## **4.2 Population and sampling**

Purposive sampling was used to select the case and participants. Robson (2002) asserts that the principle of purposive sampling is based on the researcher’s judgement while Gall, Gall and Borg (2003) postulate that the goal of purposive sampling is to select cases that are likely to be information rich. In this study UZ qualified for the study given the issues of quality in HE that revolved around the institution with respect to aspects of teaching and learning in the universities. Thus purposive sampling resulted in having one case for the study, UZ. In addition to this UZ was the most accessible HEI to be the case for this study in terms of costs. Although findings of the study of UZ could not be generalized to other HEIs, other universities could judge for themselves whether the findings in this study applied to their situations too, with regards to quality of teaching and learning, thus enabling the transferability of findings to other universities.

HE consists of very different educational programs, of which teachers and students may perceive and experience quality of teaching and learning differently within the same institution. Therefore informants from diverse institutional categories (faculties) based on Becher’s (1994) broad disciplines which are associated with disciplinary cultures participated. Although basing the choice of the population on Becher’s ideas could be controversial to some researchers, at least he (Becher) identifies some useful dimensions that described disciplinary variations, which the study was based on for the choice of population. The population for the study was therefore derived from the following disciplines: hard-pure (e.g. physics), hard-applied (engineering), soft-pure (e.g. anthropology) and soft applied (e.g.



education). This classification influenced the choice of the population hence department chairpersons, teachers and students from each broad academic discipline (hard-pure, hard-applied, soft-pure, or soft-applied) participated in the study leading to ten department chairpersons (2 females and 8 males), 10 teachers (3 females and 7 males) and six focus groups (13 female and 32 male students) participating in the study as depicted in Table 4 below.

BROAD UZ ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE	BECHER'S DISCIPLINARY CATEGORIES	UZ FACULTIES	NUMBER OF CHAIRPERSONS WHO PARTICIPATED (DEPARTMENTS REMAIN ANONYMOUS)		NUMBER OF TEACHERS WHO PARTICIPATED		NUMBER OF STUDENTS AND THEIR GENDER WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE 10 FOCUSED GROUPS	
			Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males
Humanities	Soft-pure	Commerce	0	1	0	1	2	2
		Arts	0	1	1	0	3	2
	Soft applied	Education	0	1	0	1	1	4
		Social Science	1	0	1	0	1	3
		Law	0	1	0	1	2	2
Sciences	Hard-pure	Science	0	1	0	1	2	3
		Medicine	1	0	1	0	2	3
		Veterinary Science	0	1	0	1	0	4
Health sciences	Hard applied	Engineering	0	1	0	1	0	4
		Agriculture	0	1	0	1	0	5
TOTALS			2	8	3	7	13	32
			10		10		45	

Table 4: Faculties and informants that participated in the study

The choice of department chairpersons was ideal as these acted as links between the UZ administration and teachers. Department chairpersons were part of the administrative hierarchy while they also taught in their departments. They practically participated in both teaching and learning while they also administered the university departments. The chairpersons of departments linked with institutional authorities, thereby seeing to it that institutional and government policies on teaching and learning at UZ were implemented while they also taught in various disciplines. An initial contact with one university chairperson of a department was made. He/she then enabled a connection to another chairperson of a department in any faculty from the list of departments of faculties that were yet to participate

leading to an implementation of some sort of a snowball effect. The chairpersons also assisted in identifying the teachers whom they regarded as information rich and who could participate in the study in their departments.

Yin (2003:97) stresses that `a major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence` while Robson (2002) proposes the use of more than one source of information as this provides a means of testing one source of information against the other. Use of data triangulation improved the quality of the study. Forty-five UZ students participated in this study since they were viewed as crucial as other stakeholders at UZ. They were viewed as potential providers of the other side of the story in relation to their perceptions and experiences of the quality of teaching and learning at UZ whereby information from them complemented that from chairpersons of departments and teachers. Teachers who participated in the study assisted in putting up groups of students who participated in the study. Once introduced to potential informants (chairpersons, teachers or students), the final arrangements of meetings and schedules were made.

As depicted in the Table 1, male members of staff at UZ (chairpersons and teachers) dominated as participants (5 females and 15 males). This was due to male domination of the staff complement at UZ. The domination could be attributed to more males taking up chairpersons' posts (2 females and 8 males) and ultimately participating in the study. Teacher complement of the institution was also dominated by males (3 females and 7 males) leading to more males participating in the study. Voluntary participation also led to male domination to participate in the study since more males were forthcoming. Also more male students (13 females and 32 males) were eager to share their feelings and perceptions about the quality of teaching and learning at UZ.

### **4.3 Methods of collecting data, instruments and procedures**

To obtain information on the resource related factors that critically influenced quality of teaching and learning at UZ, methods of collecting the data, and instruments is summarized in Table 5 with regards to research questions that were answered in the study.

<b>Main research question</b>	<b>Sub-questions</b>	<b>Data collection method</b>	<b>Source of data</b>
What are the resource related factors that critically influence the quality of teaching and learning at the University of Zimbabwe?	What resources are available to the University of Zimbabwe to maintain and/or enhance quality of teaching and learning?	Interviews Focus groups	Department chairpersons Teachers Students
	To what extent is the governmental regulatory framework influencing the quality of teaching and learning at University of Zimbabwe?	Interviews	Department chairpersons Teachers
	How does the University of Zimbabwe adapt to the current resource situation and regulatory framework?	Interviews Focus groups	Teachers Department chairpersons Students
	What strategic options are available to the University of Zimbabwe to acquire critical resources to improve the quality of teaching and learning?	Interviews Focus groups	Department chairpersons Teachers Students

*Table 5: Research questions, methods and data sources used in the study*

Interview was used as the main method of collecting data from chairpersons of departments and teachers on the factors that influenced quality of teaching and learning at UZ. Gall et al (2003) and Kvale (1996) concur that an interview is a conversation that has a structure and a purpose that goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of views in everyday conversation characterized by careful questioning and listening with a purpose. Thus it involves a conversation between two or more people, in this study the researcher and the department chairperson/teacher, with the aim of obtaining information on resource related factors that critically influenced quality of teaching and learning at UZ. For this study one department chairperson or teacher was interviewed at a time. Since interview stimulate a discussion (Flick, 2007), it enabled the sharing of informants' thoughts about what happened at UZ, giving them a chance to express their experiences, and their basic perceptions (Patton, 2002:21) and tell it as they saw (Denzin, 1978:10 in Patton, 2002:21) the quality of teaching and learning at UZ. Consequently, to strengthen the study, triangulation was employed. There was data triangulation by which a variety of data sources (department chairpersons, teachers and students) participated in the study (Denzin, 1978 in Patton, 2002).

Bryman (2004) argues that in qualitative approaches researchers themselves act as instruments of data collection, often characterized by sustained and intimate contact and relationships with their subjects. With this in mind, the researcher had to be physically on the ground to collect data on the resource related factors that critically influenced quality in teaching and learning at UZ as the 'fundamental purpose of qualitative research is to capture the subject's perspectives and views of values, actions, processes and events' (Fairbrother, 2007). To an extent, the researcher acted as the instrument.

In addition to the semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions the study elicited perceptions and experiences of department chairpersons and teachers as their viewpoints were 'more likely to be expressed in an openly designed interview situation', (Flick, 2007:149). The interview guide increased the strength of the comprehensiveness of the data and made 'data somewhat systematic for each respondent' while it also made the process 'fairly conversational and situational' (Patton, 2002:288). Open ended questions assisted since whenever any of the participants did not understand any of the questions, rephrasing and explaining for clarity sake were done.

Chairpersons and teachers were able to respond in their own terms (Patton, 2002) while questions were clarified and responses pursued in an effort to seek further details. Thus open ended questions assisted in exercising some latitude to ask further questions in response to what were seen as significant replies (Bryman, 2004) thereby enabling the deeper probing to obtain more information (Gall et al, 2003). Personal experience was used to design the interview guides for all informants: the department chairpersons, and teachers. The semi structured interview guide also enabled obtaining of more information from the participants through their body language all of which assisted in answering the research problem that regarded the resource related factors that critically influenced quality of teaching and learning at UZ.

Focus group interview was used to collect data from students from the different faculties and departments. Focus group involved discussion of a specific topic with several people who assemble for this specific purpose at the same time (Bryman, 2004; Gall et al, 2003). Through the focus group students discussed the factors that influenced quality of teaching and learning at UZ. In the process students got the chance to attend and respond to each other thereby giving themselves a chance to construct a common perspective in relation to quality of teaching and learning at UZ within their groups despite differing on some issues. Focus group

assisted the extraction of how students made sense of their situation at UZ, thereby helping to understand why students thought, felt and reacted the way they did (Bryman, 2004) in focus groups with regards to factors that influenced quality of teaching and learning. Students were encouraged to respect the different perspectives of group members. Focus group saved time and money as there was a short distance to UZ while a lot of detailed information was obtained from different students within a short space of time. Some groups took more time than what was anticipated. Such discussions were left to take their course so that all the participants' feelings and perceptions could be obtained while possible encroachments into pending appointments were avoided by reminding participants of impending schedules. Others voluntarily opted out of the discussions to attend to other activities such as lectures. That was acceptable as part of voluntary participation in the study. Besides getting common opinions of the students (and clashes in some instances), it was possible to make follow ups with individuals immediately after the focus group for clarifications and/or issues pertaining to personal points of view about the resource related factors that critically influenced quality of teaching and learning at UZ while some students later on volunteered with additional information after some focus group meetings.

The procedure that was employed from the initial to the final stages of the study is depicted in Figure 4 below.

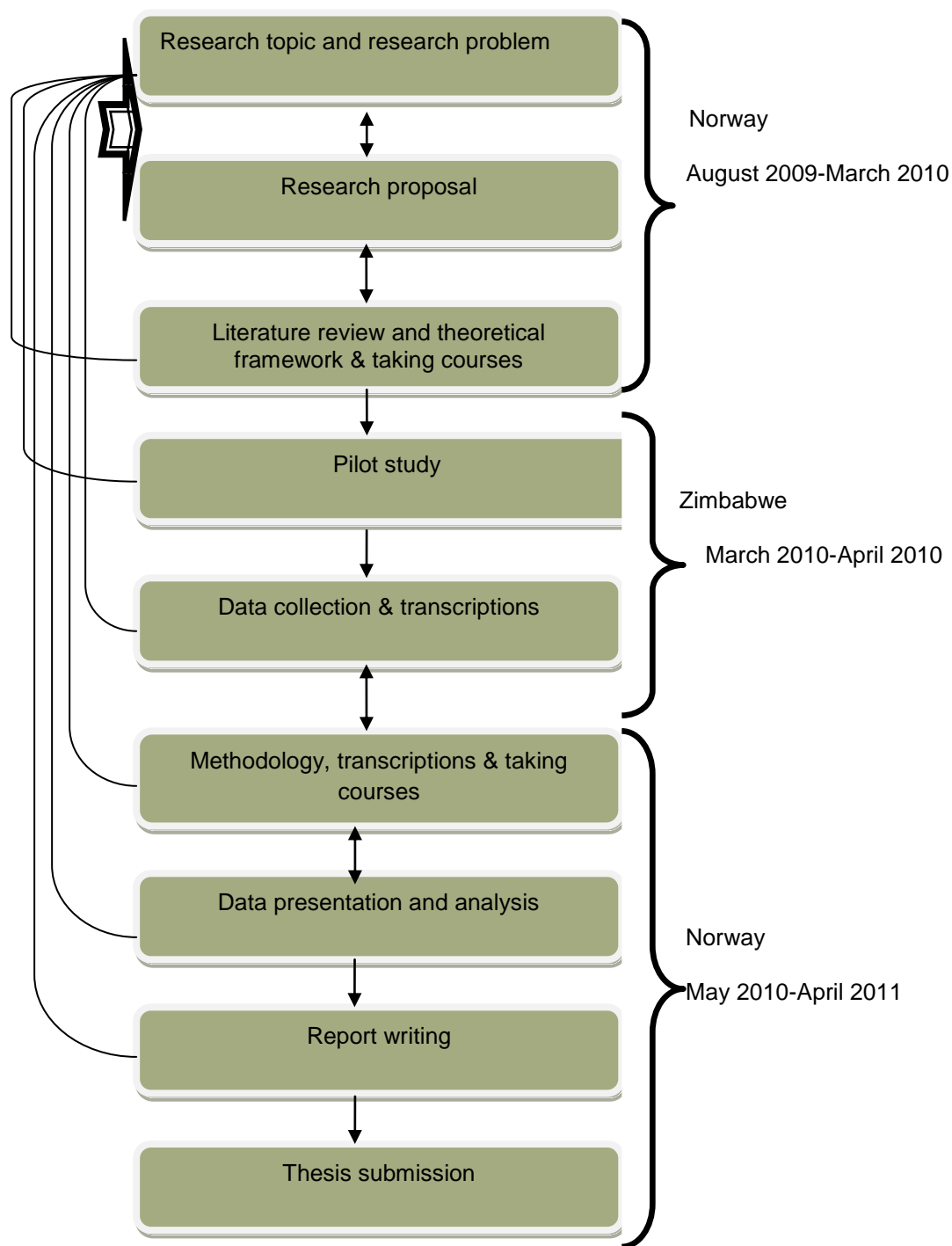


Figure 6: Summary of procedure of study

All stages involved going back and forth taking cognizance of the research topic and research problem. A research topic and problem was first formulated after which a proposal was drafted in consultation with the supervisors. Several alterations were made in order to come up with researchable questions. Some literature review and theoretical framework was then revised through consultation of various authorities cognizance of the research questions that

were at hand. Pilot study was done before the final data collection was carried out while transcriptions, data presentation and analysis followed thereafter. Methodology used in the study was then written leading to data presentation and analysis before a final report was compiled.

## **4.4 Pilot study and pretesting**

Robson (2002) described a pilot study as a mini-version of the study that should be conducted before the researcher engages in the main study. In this study piloting helped to refine data collection plans with respect to both the content of the data and the procedures to be followed (Yin, 2003). Pre-testing the instruments enabled the implementation of some changes in questions that sounded ambiguous in the guides. It was noted that focus groups required considerable time as some students took long to discuss quality issues that were related to teaching and learning in their HEI.

The pilot study was taken in a university with participants who had the same characteristics as those that finally participated in the main study, i.e. in a state university with chairpersons of departments, teachers and students. Only one department chairperson, one teacher and one focus group of six students participated in the pilot study.

## **4.5 Organization of data**

### **4.5.1 Anonymization of data**

As an ethical issue, participants who provided data for the study were given pseudonyms as a way of ensuring that they remained anonymous. Pseudonyms protected the privacy of interviewees as individuals (Sarantakos, 1998). Table 6 shows the pseudonyms that were allocated to the department chairpersons and teachers who participated in interviews as well as students who participated through focus groups. For instance DC1 represented department chairperson who participated in the first interview of all the interviews of department chairpersons that participated in interviews. T7 represented the teacher who participated in the seventh interview of all the interviews of teachers that participated in interviews. FG3 represented the views of student participants in focus the third focus group.

Pseudonyms of informants	Brief explanations
DC1, DC2,... DC10	Department chairperson in first interview (DC1), Department chairperson in second interview (DC2)...Department chairperson in tenth interview (DC10)
T1, T2,...T7	Teacher in first interview (T1), Teacher in second interview (T2)...Teacher in seventh interview (T7)
FG1, FG2,...FG4	Participant's perception in first focus group (FG1), Participant's perception in second focus group (FG2)...Participant's perception in fourth focus group (FG4).

*Table 6: Pseudonyms that were used for the participants*

### 4.5.2 Organization of the audio data

To further strengthen maintain anonymity of the cases and informants, the audio files were also allocated the same pseudonyms as for the participants as shown in Table 6. For example the audio file for the interview for the department chairperson who participated in the first interview was named DC1 while an audio file for a teacher who participated in the fifth interview was named T5. A file for the eighth focus group was named FG8 and so forth.

### 4.5.3 Data presentation and analysis

The audio files were replayed several times so as to capture any valuable information on participants' views that may have been missed. The verbatim in audio interview files were then transcribed by the interviewer. Transcription was done only as much and only as exactly as was required to answer the research question thereby disregarding unnecessary information. The text was then read and reread for familiarization with the data, while noting some salient issues raised by every informant and noting significant remarks in the process. Theory and literature were always taken cognizance of as these guided the study so as to note the preset themes and sub-themes. Priori (preset) themes therefore came from prior theoretical understanding of the phenomenon (resource related factors that critically influenced quality of teaching and learning) as advised by Bernard & Ryan (2010). This helped to put together data that answered the research questions while disregarding the irrelevant data drawn from the informants' responses which is summarized in Table 7 below.



Research question	Sub- question	Preset themes	Sub-themes
What are the resource related factors that critically influence the quality of teaching and learning at the University of Zimbabwe?	What resources are available to the University of Zimbabwe to maintain and/or enhance quality of teaching and learning?	Funding	State support
			Donor support
		Academic staff compliment	Qualified teachers
			Assistant teachers
		Students	Qualified students
	To what extent is the governmental regulatory framework influencing the quality of teaching and learning at University of Zimbabwe?	Infrastructure	Classroom space
		State involvement	Management
			Quality monitoring
	How does the University of Zimbabwe adapt to the current resource situation and regulatory framework?	Diversity in resource procurement	Foreign staff
			Assistant and part-time staff
			Tuition fees
			Entrepreneurship
	What strategic options are available to the University of Zimbabwe to acquire critical resources to improve the quality of teaching and learning?	Infrastructure	Student accommodation
		Materials	ICT
		Staff working conditions	Improved remuneration
			Student teacher ratios
			Staff motivation

Table 7: Research question, sub-questions, categories and sub-categories

Answers from all the participants that contributed to the study were grouped together in relation to sub-questions to produce the final case study supported by direct quotations of the informants. Simplified transcription symbols and meanings for participants' responses are given in Table 8.

Transcription symbols	Brief explanations
(hhh)	h's in parentheses indicate laughter
( )	Parentheses indicate transcriber's best guess of what the informant said
=	Equal marks indicate a continuation of the same utterance
(5)	Any number in parentheses indicates pauses in approximated seconds
<of course>	Any words in brackets pointing outwards indicate words said more quickly than the surrounding discourse
>no ways<	Any words in brackets pointing outwards indicate words said more slowly than the surrounding discourse
[i can do ]	Any words in square brackets indicate overlapping speech: one person spoke while the other was still talking
<u>Yes</u>	Any underlined words indicate stress or emphasis
.t	Alveolar suction click (to show anger or disgruntlement)
°Ok°	Any words in between degree signs indicate speech said with reduced volume
HERE	Any words in capital letters indicate word(s) or phrase(s) said with increased volume
No,	Comma after any word indicates non-finality in the speech
H	h indicates audible exhalation by the participant

Table 8: Transcription symbols and meanings used to denote direct speeches of participants

## 4.6. Ethical considerations

In order to conform to acceptable ethical standards official channels were cleared ‘by formally requesting permission` (Bell, 2003:45) from the gate-keepers. For this study, permission was sought from the department chairpersons of UZ. The *principle of voluntary* participation was highly respected before collecting data from the participants. It was up to the individual chairperson, teacher or student to participate in the study. Any participant was free to withdraw from participation at any stage as advised by Cohen and Marion (1994). Closely related to voluntary participation was the issue of informed consent (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Befring, 2004). Explanation to the prospective participants of the purpose of the study was done so as to give them a chance to make their own informed choices. Participants were

guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity of both their identity and information that they divulged. Explanation was given to the participants that the use of the data was for research purposes only. As advised by Kvale (1996), participants were ensured full disclosure of information about the findings of the research.

## **4.7 Efforts to enhance quality of study**

Many authorities concur that reliability and validity make up an important component in the establishment of quality of a research study. Bryman (2004:173-174) defined reliability as concerning ‘whether the results of a study are repeatable’ while validity concerns ‘whether a measure is measuring what it is supposed to measure’. While reliability and validity are generally applicable to quantitative research, these were taken care of in this qualitative study through use of other considerations, i.e. trustworthiness and authenticity as advised by Lincoln (1985) and Guba and Lincoln (1994) in Bryman (2004).

To take care of member validation, after every interview, contributions provided by the participant(s) were summarized as a way of confirming if the participant(s) had really said the summarized versions. This gave them a chance to clarify any distorted facts and even retract some information. Descriptions of resource related factors that critically influenced quality of teaching and learning at UZ were gotten through sourcing information from a number of participants from different disciplines and departments at the UZ. This made it possible for the transferability of findings to other universities with the same characteristics as UZ. Triangulation was also used to enhance quality of the study through the use of more than one source. Instead of just relying on information provided by the chairpersons of departments as the main informants in the study, students and teachers also participated so as to enhance quality of the accounts given.

Parallel to reliability in quantitative research, is dependability of the study in qualitative studies which aims at establishing merit of research through the enhancement of trustworthiness by ‘ensuring that complete records are kept of all phases of the research process’ (Bryman, 2004:274). To ensure dependability, all the recorded interviews and interview transcripts were safely kept and always readily available.

## 4.8 Field challenges faced and how they were overcome

In this study *challenge* was viewed as a ‘... difficult task that tests somebody’s ability and skill’ (Wehmeier, 2003:192). This study therefore, considered challenges as the difficulties that were encountered and that had to be overcome for it to be a success.

Permission to carry out the study was intended to be gotten at the location of the study, UZ, without realization of other unforeseen bureaucratic red tape. That led to overlooking of the Public Order Security Act (POSA) that forbids any gathering of more than two people without police clearance. It was hoped that for an educational study police permission was irrelevant. Thus it became risky and ‘criminal’ to have the focus groups without the police permission hence focus groups needed sanctioning by the police of the district in which UZ is located. Local police was informed of the impending focus group meetings with students lest data collection could have been a fiasco. Such compliance made it possible for data collection to proceed without incidents. It was anticipated that POSA could have impacted negatively on students’ willingness to open up but the opposite was experienced. Students participated freely and most of them took some focus groups as given opportunities to express their feelings about HE at UZ. However for some students in focus groups, the need for a lot of probing could have been a result of the existence of POSA at the back of their minds thus leading to a number of students calling me later to make additions to the focus group contributions.

Appointments were made with informants but four of them flouted appointments left, right and centre by cancelling appointments several times citing other engagements and/or commitments while one totally failed to honour the meeting agreement. Incidences such as these led to failure to exhaust issues raised by informants, which is one of the essences of interview. For the one who totally failed to honour appointments despite several reschedules, a replacement was sought. This was done so as not to miss an informant from a department. The researcher had to adhere to reschedules until the interviews were finally held at the times that were convenient for the informants. Such postponements caused some time wasting and rushing against time to collect data and avoid missing other meetings.

Some students organized the focus groups themselves particularly during their free times. However, one teacher preferred to have a lecture with the same students during the free time

instead, which could be regarded as a clear failure to adhere to set time tables of the university. The teacher's decision was respected while the focus group was rescheduled with the students still eager to participate.

In some focus groups students held divergent views on topics that were discussed. Therefore on some occasions some participants were easily overwhelmed by political posturing which easily took centre stage. This was almost inevitable since Zimbabwe was highly polarized politically. Such situation called for the interviewer's skills to steer the group and moderate it (Flick, 2007) by encouraging the participants to focus only on the real issues that were under discussion and that regarded quality of teaching and learning. That assisted greatly for focus groups to remain on course with the real issues.

Data analysis was intended to take place alongside data collection which is an aspect of qualitative research (Creswell, 2003). The process was largely disturbed by electricity cuts that were a daily occurrence that lasted several hours. Charging the voice recorder became a challenge which later put pressure in doing the transcription on later dates. Much of the transcription was therefore postponed. That contributed to some failure to make further clarifications and additions from some participants which is an aspect of interview.



## 5. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

In this chapter data on the resource related factors that influenced quality of teaching and learning at the University of Zimbabwe is presented. The participants' perceptions, experiences and feelings were drawn from the transcription of the interviews and emphasis laid on the sub- questions.

### 5.1 Critical resources available to UZ

#### 5.1.1 Funding

##### 5.1.1.1 State support

Participants indicated that UZ received some budgetary support from the state through the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education. However they also indicated that UZ was in a bad financial state as the funding was insufficient. The reason for the failure to get adequate financial support particularly from the government was attributed to the economic downfall that bedevilled the country over the years. Reduction in budgetary support from the government was attributed to as the reason why most departments and the university at large faced financial constraints. When asked to comment on the budget at the institution and departments as well as the impact on teaching and learning in the institution, the following were some notable responses:

DC8: Right now there is no budget to talk of. The money that the university is operating on is through the collection of fees and not from the government.

DC2: We don't have funding. We used to rely a lot on donor funding and now we can't attract any funding from outside and all we have to depend on is our government which is also BROKE.

DC5: So far we have no budget to talk about. Here in the department we have no money. Nothing completely.

DC5 indicated that there was 'no budget to take about in universities particularly at this university (2) budgeting ONLY TUITION FEES'. The government also controlled the tuition that UZ charged. Asked how reduced budgetary support had impacted on the quality of teaching and learning, some department chairpersons stated:

DC4: I find it tough to explain to lecturers how they can deliver some good lectures while UZ fail to supply them with teaching and learning materials.

DC10: Surely lecturers are going out of their way subsidizing the university buying teaching and learning materials (2) the question is FOR HOW LONG CAN THEY DO THAT.

#### **5.1.1.2 Donor support**

There was revelation that the donor community had since reduced its support to UZ, but at least the institution still received some little external support from the donor community. At the same time there was a feeling among participants that UZ misused some of such assistance from the international community. Notable remarks that regarded receipt of assistance by UZ from the international community and suspicions were as follows:

T2: I understand there is some funding at UZ for buying books and repairing roads but at the end of the day all that is not done.

T4: I once heard that UZ once received something like two hundred and fifty million dollars from Norway to buy books which were never bought.

UZ experienced some critical shortages of water which caused its closure for a couple of months. The institution accessed support from the international community which enabled the resumption of teaching and learning at the institution. UZ managed to get external support in drilling boreholes from Australia through UNICEF to ensure safe drinking water for the institution. DC6 indicated that UZ had become a health hazard due to water shortages which disrupted teaching and learning, an opinion which is summarized in the following excerpt:

In case you are not aware of it (2). Recently we had a serious water shortage here. Had it not been Australia or should I say UNICEF UZ could still be facing a water shortage up to now.

The same participant went on to indicate that the boreholes alleviated the problem of water shortage at UZ which eventually partly contributed to the reopening of the institution.

### **5.1.2 Academic staff compliment**

#### **5.1.2.1 Qualified teachers**

A few qualified academics were available. The institution faced shortages of academics in most departments that participated in the study. Most of the qualified staff who could have augmented the staff complement had migrated to countries in the region and beyond leaving behind those that were mostly under qualified. The reasons for the migration included the harsh economic conditions that characterized Zimbabwe for a considerable period of time leading to enticement by higher wages and improved working conditions in foreign lands. In



addition to that, some academics had moved abroad due to a volatile political climate that existed in the country. Notable views on the academic staff complement at UZ were as follows:

T9: Now it's really tight=because most of my colleagues have left. Now there are few of us who are experienced here.

DC7: Currently I have 9 lecturers instead of TWENTY.

DC5: The department is running at twenty percent capacity. We are supposed to have thirty lecturers in this department but we only have EIGHT.

T4: Lecturers are leaving for greener pastures here. You know we are going under difficult times here in Zimbabwe. The political landscape is not good (3) the economic landscape is not good. People have to feed and the only solution is to go out and GET FOOD.

DC10: Most of the experienced staff has left for greener pastures in the region, abroad and so =. So most of the staff that we have now are those that are inexperienced.

Asked how the shortage of academics had impacted on the quality of teaching and learning some participants indicated that the inadequacy of the teaching staff had led to the available teachers being overloaded by increased teaching loads. The teachers were overburdened.

T6: It's really a challenge teaching here now. Imagine teaching two hundred and fifty students (3) you have to give them assignments and mark them. Imagine the pressure at the end of a semester when we have to give students exams that have to be marked on time. We really feel the pressure I tell you.

Despite indicating that a challenging working environment prevailed at UZ, some teachers were prepared to continue working at the institution as the situation showed signs of improvement on the administrative, economic and political fronts while some could change their minds if the perceived change failed to come through. To some the issue of salaries and working conditions were being addressed by the authorities while others were pessimistic to some extent. Some participants expressed the following:

T1: With this government of national unity, the political and economic <situation is fast improving> so much I feel I will continue teaching here if the situation maintains this direction. In the past when politicians in Zimbabwe thought of a university particularly UZ they saw lecturers as fellow politicians but now that perception is changing.

T8: I will stay here as much as I can stay but if things continue with slow improvement as it is now I will go out too.

As a result of staff shortages at UZ teacher student enrolment at UZ was very high that most teachers and students found it problematic to cope with the teaching and learning processes. On this issue some participants expressed:

T8: I am teaching a first course with five hundred plus students.

T7: The ratio of students to one teacher is too much. Imagine teaching TWO HUNDRED medical students.

FG10: You find a lecturer teaching up to one hundred and eighty students in a lecture making it almost impossible to even talk to him or her.

Other participants indicated that high student teacher ratio had led to students' failure to interact with their teachers or even to make appointments for clarifications on taught concepts. Interaction between students and teachers was a challenge. FG4 said:

It is hard to make an appointment with a lecturer to get any clarification of some lectures. You ask him if you can meet for some explanations and he says he has many appointments IN ADDITION TO MEETINGS.

### **5.1.3 Students**

#### **5.1.3.1 Qualified students**

There was a feeling that the quality of students that UZ enrolled had fallen to below standard compared to the enrolments in previous years. 'Looking at the quality of students themselves, they are not as good as what they used to be' IDC4 said. It was indicated that UZ used to be 'the premier higher education at which everyone wanted to enrol at' (T3) and 'they used to enrol quality students in the past years' (DC2). IT3 added:

I have just finished marking their assignments and I was actually discussing with a colleague that well they are of university quality but not up to the level we used to have in the past.

It was revealed that some departments enrolled many under-qualified students. For instance the cut-off points they used to enforce were no longer of emphasis due to difficulties to lure the required numbers into the institution.

FG6: When we enrolled for our BA programme, we were required to have eleven points but now the same programme is GOING FOR THREE POINTS. Law was fifteen points but it's going for nine points.

Asked for other causes of enrolment of under-qualified students with low points at UZ, participants also attributed that to unaffordable fees that UZ charged while those who had the required points but from poor economic backgrounds failed to take up higher education. FG9 concurred:

those who are rich even though they have very few points for any programme are the ones now enrolling here. Bright ones are not enrolling or continuing with university education because they are riddled by economic problems.

Some participants indicated that some students lacked self motivation in their approach to teaching and learning. ‘Some students need to be pushed so much that even if you give them an assignment they don’t mind attending to it at all’ (T8). However students at UZ did not make up a homogeneous group in this regard. Student motivation differed with departments or programmes. While some students lacked motivation, others had encouraging attitudes as they were keen to participate in teaching and learning. Some students were self propelled. For instance T8 said:

Classes differ in their attitudes towards teaching and learning. Like the class I am taking for (minology) I think they are raring to go. Their attitude is very good.

Asked to shade light on the calibre of students at UZ, some participants revealed that unpreparedness of some students in teaching and learning manifested itself through frequent absence from lectures that at times some lectures had to be cancelled as too few student attended. Notable remarks on student attendances of lectures were from the following department chairperson and teacher respectively:

DC3: Turn out of students is so demoralizing. You find a teacher getting only fifty percent of the turn-out.

T5: Some classes’ attitude is so disappointing. Like the other time I had to postpone a lecture three times because STUDENTS WERE NOT COMING.

While some students were frequently absent from lectures, some were unhappy with feedback from their teachers particularly with regards to return of marked assignments. They got some feedback but after a long time. FG7 stated that:

Ah (2) we get some of the assignments after we have forgotten about them in our department.

Asked to comment on the possible causes of late feedback on assignments by the teachers, some of them expressed that they faced a lot of pressure when it came to marking of the numerous assignments for students. T8 remarked that ‘personally I find it really tough to finish marking assignments of TWO HUNDRED PLUS students in time.’

## 5.2 Government regulatory framework

### 5.2.1 State involvement

#### 5.2.1.1 Management

Participants were critical of the quality of leadership that was available at UZ. They revealed that UZ lacked autonomy in the appointment of quality institutional leaders based on merit. Participants' views were that the state interfered in the way the university leadership was appointed. Instead of appointing the UZ leadership on merit, participants revealed that the state influenced most the appointees to take up administrative posts at UZ. The following teachers raised concern on UZ management:

T8: Those people who are at the top in this university are more of political appointees rather than academic. They are academic to some extent but I strongly believe they are more of political appointees. Some of the decisions they take which affect teachers and students in teaching and learning are more political rather than more advancements. Positions must be given to those who really deserve them regardless of their political affiliations. Because the moment you want to put politics in higher education I think you have problems.

T2: There are lots of political appointees here that do not even see what is really important for teaching and learning. They are more after pleasing the people who appointed them at the expense of the survival of the institution.

Asked how the state influenced the quality of teaching and learning at UZ through the institution's leadership, it was revealed that the administration took their time to rectify the situation that prevailed as they consulted government officials who happened to be leaders of political parties. For instance, department chairperson DC1 indicated that they talked to the administration about not having enough expertise not only in the department but also in the entire university. All this fell on deaf ears as the university administration tended to wait for ministerial orders. The following teacher and department chairperson expressed respectively:

T7: The leadership here don't really care about the primary purpose of a university. It is concerned with teachers' and lecturers' political positions at the expense of teaching and learning.

DC4: At times you question the calibre of the leadership at this university. You raise issues with them (3) issues that can take the university forward and they will take time to ACT as they try to find answers from politicians.

It was indicated that UZ leadership failed independent decisions. For instance the university policy at UZ was that students were supposed to have paid the tuition fees before they were admitted into lectures. However UZ failed to enforce this due to state interference leading to the institution remaining in financial quagmire most of the time as was indicated by one respondent:

DC4: Usually the university tells students to produce receipts to show that they have paid fees or else they are not allowed into classes. This has often been frustrated by directives from the higher education ministry to let everyone attend classes whether they have paid or not. I tell you UZ leaders fail to run this university on their own (2) instead they ask individuals who are out UZ for the way to go particularly politicians.

#### **5.2.1.2 Quality monitoring**

The government of Zimbabwe had since established the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education whose mandate was partly to ensure quality HE prevailed in higher institutions of learning which included UZ DC6 said: 'I am sure you are aware that we now have the Council for Higher Education which was established to oversee quality in universities in Zimbabwe'.

Asked to express their views about the Council for Higher Education (CHE) in monitoring quality in universities, some participants praised the idea of establishing such a body. However with reflection to the implementation of its mandate by the CHE, some participants expressed lack of confidence in its functions. They did not see the body carrying out its mandate. Notable sentiments were as follows:

DC10: The Council for Higher Education is a noble (3) is a good thing to have. Universities cannot just be left to do their own quality monitoring. Someone from out has to do as we expect that there won't be any bias.

DC7: Ah THAT COUNCIL. That is a useless body I tell you. We just read about in newspapers but to tell you the truth I have never heard that those guys visited any universities to see what's going on.

T4: We have a Council for Higher Education (3) a body that is not monitoring any quality at all. I don't know what those people are really doing to tell you the truth.

#### **5.2.1.3. Curriculum**

The government through the Council for Higher Education ensured that all the university curricula remained relevant to the national vision. Participants hailed the relevance of curriculum that was available in the various departments. They described it

as containing the ability to prepare them for the world of work. For instance T6 expressed that in his/her department:

The curriculum here is something that one would love as adequately preparing would be graduates for the world of work in any part of the world. I praise the government in monitoring this.

FG4 also concurred that they were ‘really happy with the content of our programmes which makes many employers prefer graduates from UZ than from all the mushrooming universities’. Even chairpersons of departments expressed satisfaction with the curriculum that they had in departments at UZ. DC7 said that he strongly felt that their ‘curriculum prepared their students for life after university education’.

The curriculum was reviewed periodically by committees at departmental levels while some departments also consulted with other universities in foreign countries leading to subsequent amendments. They did this particularly with specific departments in HEIs with which they had some cooperation agreements. The following excerpts shed light on the curriculum that was available in the different departments:

FG5: For me I am quite happy with syllabus that we use. I really feel I am being prepared for work in the medical field.

FG8: Our curriculum is really good. That is why the labour market favours graduates from UZ. In terms of knowledge we leave this place more knowledgeable than the graduates from the other universities in the country (2) and I don't see myself failing to secure a job AFTER MY GRADUATION.

DC7: In this department we use an upgraded curriculum which we attend to every year in conjunction with other universities in Africa.

DC1: We update the curriculum as the board of the department every year.

T4: I would say the curriculum we use is really something you will like and our graduates wouldn't have any problem to go into the job market and excel after graduation.

## **5.3 UZ adaptation to resource situation**

### **5.3.1 Diversity in resource procurement**

#### **5.3.1.1 Foreign teachers**

Some UZ departments attracted some foreign teachers as guest teachers especially those that were on sabbatical leave. Such teachers augmented the institution's teaching fraternity. DC4 remarked that they often had ‘guest lecturers from Africa and Europe who assisted the staff

particularly in staff development programmes' and 'analysis of our curriculum'. In the same department they also had 'permanent and part-time members of staff from countries such as South Africa' (DC4). Nevertheless the situation was not the same with all departments as some were shunned by teachers from the regional and international community. DC6 said that the department 'used to have exchange programmes between our staff and other universities internationally but no longer attracted even a single lecturer in a year'. Instead the department relied mostly on students who were still pursuing their master programmes to fill in as part-time lectures. Asked to explain what the cause of failure to attract teachers from abroad could be, DC6 explained:

° The political landscape is really bad, the economic landscape has been poor for the past ten years. So foreign qualified teachers are yet to change their perception about this country °

To respondents, failure to attract academics from abroad was due to Zimbabwe's poor relationship with other countries in addition to political instability that prevailed in the country which was a cause for concern.

### **5.3.1.2 Assistant and part-time teachers**

As an alternative to augment the staff complement, UZ employed some master students as assistant teachers. It was common for most departments to engage students who pursued their master studies as assistant teachers in theory but who, quite often, took full loads of work that were supposed to be taken by qualified academics. DC3 explained:

... the university has resorted to hiring students who are doing masters on (probational) basis and it says you are a temporary lecturer. They are given some induction yes but you find someone who is grappling with his academic work is invited to teach other students.

Some individuals who worked in other sectors other than HE also took up assistant teachers posts at UZ or were employed on part time basis. Individuals who were still in the country and qualified to take up teaching posts at UZ shunned taking up permanent posts citing reasons such as salaries that were viewed as generally low in comparison to what was offered by the private sector and the rest of the region. Asked to shade light on the effort to lure qualified individuals as teachers, department chairperson DC2 remarked:

We have a programme which is stagnant at the moment. It is supposed to be run by registered psychologists but we are failing to recruit them because they are finding it more profitable to work in the private sector. We ask them to come to the university they say FOR WHAT.

### 5.3.1.3 Tuition fees

To supplement UZ funding the institution had turned to 'tuition fees that students paid for its survival' (FG3). However, some students viewed the tuition fees that UZ charged with some bitterness. To some participants tuition fees at UZ were exorbitant. Some were furious that the same people who asked them to pay for HE had virtually paid nothing to attain their qualifications in previous years while others cited poor economic backgrounds that left them with no capacity to pay. Some students expressed:

FG2: The fees are grossly unfair considering that many intellectuals in this country passed through UZ without paying even a cent. Instead they were RECEIVING GRANTS FROM THE GOVERNMENT. We really= feel the pain here for the fees that we pay. They force us to pay fees here yet some of us come from very humble backgrounds. [Like myself] I DON'T HAVE ANY SOURCE OF INCOME.

FG7 added:

It's so frustrating that we are asked to pay tuition fees by people who paid nothing to obtain the degrees that they have. They didn't pay anything. In fact they got GRANTS.

Asked how the tuition fees they were required to pay impacted on their learning at UZ, some student participants revealed that some female students turned to prostitution to enhance their financial capability in an effort to access HE at UZ. Some participants concurred that some female students had no option but get themselves involved in such illicit activities. They did this in order to raise money to pay their tuition fees and self sustenance. Notable remarks were as follows:

FG8: You find that some of the parents cannot afford to pay the high fees here. So some of my female colleagues have no option except to 'run around with sugar dadies in order to raise the fees'

DC2: Well some of our female students no longer hesitate to get involved in prostitution to raise fees or money to sustain themselves (hhh).

It was also revealed that the tuition fees that UZ charged had forced some would be students to abandon enrolling into some programmes. It was revealed that some programmes had failed to lure required numbers of students leading to their postponement. A notable contribution was as follows:

T10: This year in our department out of all the students we enrolled, only one managed to pay fees. So we could not continue with one student. Instead we postponed the students' enrolment until the others get the fees.



FG2 agreed that it really pained them to pay the high fees that UZ charged given their poor economic backgrounds while some of the students resorted to digging trenches for communication companies for as little as ten dollars a day on weekends. Asked how seeking such alternative sources of revenue affected their learning, FG2 agreed that that made them attend lectures exhausted and they were unable to concentrate.

Not all students were unhappy with the tuition fees that UZ charged. In one focus group, there was a shared view of appreciation of the tuition that UZ charged compared to what other students paid in other HEIs. They agreed that to them UZ offered quality higher education compared to what was offered in other HEIs in the country. A notable excerpt from FG3 was as follows:

Here we are happy with the tuition fees we are paying compared to other universities. We get some quality higher education. THE FEES ARE AFFORDABLE.

UZ staff members (department chairpersons and teachers) who participated in the study wished for the government to stop meddling in the payment of tuition fees at UZ. They expressed that UZ needed the fees from students to continue offering teaching and learning. They went on to express that the government flip-flopped on the tuition fees issue because at times it ordered that students with arrears be allowed to attend classes.

DC9: Students have to pay fees. I even wish they could meet the deadlines in this regard (3) because for this university to survive it needs money.

T3: At one time the government said we had to allow students to attend lectures whether they had paid fees or not .t. Yet it orders UZ to make sure that every STUDENT PAYS.

#### **5.3.1.4 Entrepreneurship**

Although some participants indicated that UZ relied mainly on tuition fees paid by students, others revealed that it also engaged itself in some entrepreneurial activities. For instance UZ earned some money from farming activities carried out at its farms. ‘We as an institution do some farming through the Faculty of Agriculture,’ said DC2. DC10 indicated that in a project ‘University of Zimbabwe realized \$120 million from income generating activities’. There were also some entrepreneurial activities at departmental level. DC5 said, ‘we spend time as a department selling some items to raise money for the department’. Asked how such entrepreneurship impacted on the quality of teaching and learning at UZ and departments in particular, DC5 went on to say that although they tried to supplement the little that the HEI had, they remained in dire need for more support as they were still unable to procure what they needed to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

## 5.4 Some strategic options to resource acquisition

Faced with some challenges in resource availability in some critical areas which are necessary to enhance quality of teaching and learning, participants raised some possible options that UZ could consider.

### 5.4.1 Infrastructure

#### 5.4.1.1 Student accommodation

UZ had the option of making full use of resources that were available. Participants indicated that at the time of the study UZ did not offer any accommodation to students. Students' hostels had been closed due to their dilapidating condition and lack of clean water at the university campus. As a result students faced challenges in acquiring accommodation so they sought alternative accommodation within the city, where most of the available accommodation was beyond the students' affordability. It was felt that the closure of student hostels negatively affected students' participation in teaching and learning at UZ. They wished that the accommodation could be reopened while more student hostels needed to be constructed. Notable remarks were as follows:

FG3: It is important that student halls are opened instead of keeping every student outside the campus. Out there accommodation is too expensive. Most of us cannot afford.

FG9: [For accommodation] there is need for building of more students hostels because the available ones are too old. Closing students' hostels because they want to renovate them is not a good excuse. They can do that while we stay there. Surely these people don't have students at heart PERIOD.

Asked how students' residence outside the campus affected quality of teaching and learning at UZ, some participants expressed:

FG1: Imagine travelling to UZ everyday and struggling to get transport. Some of us get here quite late when the lecture has already started.

T6: Some students get university late when I have started teaching yet most of the time I don't the time to repeat what I have taught.

DC8: Given the transport problem we have in Harare (3) some students get to lectures very late and as a result they miss what lecturers teach regularly.

## **5.4.2 Materials**

### **5.4.2.1 ICT**

To supplement materials that UZ had, the institution had resorted to the installation of ICT equipment. However, some participants revealed that access to the internet at UZ remained a nightmare and needed attention by the authorities. It was difficult to surf the internet due to slow speed let alone downloading information. On some days when access improved it took long for anyone to access it. In addition to this the institution had a shortage of computers which could cater for everyone in the institution leading to some individuals using their own machines. In some departments where the machines were available, though in fewer numbers, they lacked maintenance as they were either down or infected by viruses. Asked to react to the availability of internet for teaching and learning, some participants responded:

FG5: It's painful to access internet in the computer lab here. When it is there you are given only one hour then you have to log out.

T1: It's very depressing not to get even a laptop from the university. I am using my personal laptop.

DC1: To say we have internet is really not to tell the truth because (3) yes it is there but not user friendly. You can only access the University of Zimbabwe page. You can't go beyond that. When you try to go beyond that it's very slow. Most of the time it's down. You can take more than two hours to download a single document.

DC1: You see these two computers in here. They are the only computers in the department. There is no other computer elsewhere. And these computers are infected by a virus. I can't even use my memory stick on any one of them.

Asked how students and teachers were managing to access information given the challenges in ICT they faced at UZ, it was indicated that they had no option but to access the internet at internet cafes at their own cost. DC5 said 'both students and staff have no option except going to internet cafes WHICH ARE EXPENSIVE.'

## **5.4.3 Staff working conditions**

### **5.4.3.1 Improved remuneration**

Participants felt that improved staff remuneration at UZ could lure some teachers to the institution. For the academics to be motivated to teach, participants expressed the need to be paid salaries that were commensurate with their effort. 'Surely our salaries need to be improved as we are working extremely hard here', said T7. At the time of the study their salaries had been increased to about six hundred dollars per month up from two hundred

dollars but DC4 and T8 felt that that was still insufficient for university teachers. However most of the teachers and department chairpersons were happy with the gradual improvement of their salaries. Efforts to improve the conditions were appreciated by some participants. The following were some remarks:

T5: I am not happy with our remuneration but when I compare it with where we started I can say there is some improvement (2) a great improvement. I cannot say I am happy but I think I am satisfied somehow because of the effort that is being put in trying to improve the situation. It's not yet really improved but our employer is trying.

DC3: Surely I appreciate the effort to improve our salaries. Just a year ago when we were still using zimdollar, we used to earn an equivalency of just FIVE US DOLLARS.

UZ in conjunction with the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education had introduced some incentives for the university staff whereby import duties were reduced on vehicles while priority was given to university teachers in residential stands allocations in the city of Harare. Despite all these actions, problems bedevilled the idea of introducing such incentives as there were allegations of nepotism and corruption. T10 indicated:

Incentives which are supposed to benefit staff members are politicised. It becomes very difficult for a mere someone like me to benefit from available resources. If one is not politically well connected then probably you will be the last person to get anything if ever you will get something.

#### **5.4.3.2 Student teacher ratios**

Participants expressed the need for UZ to reduce student teacher ratios. Most teachers and students found it problematic to cope with high ratios, both in the teaching and learning. Asked to express their feelings about the teacher student ratio that prevailed at the institution, some participants said:

T8: I am teaching a first course with five hundred plus students and that must be REDUCED.

T7: The ratio of students to one teacher is too much. Imagine teaching TWO HUNDRED medical students.

FG10: You find a lecturer teaching up to one hundred and eighty students in a lecture making it almost impossible to even talk to him or her.

Asked what the impact of the high student teacher ratio was on teaching and learning, some participants indicated that it had led to students' failure to interact with their teachers or even to make appointments for clarifications on the taught concepts. Interaction between students and teachers was a challenge. FG4 said:

It is hard to make an appointment with a lecturer to get any clarification of some lectures. You ask him if you can meet for some explanations and he says he has many appointments IN ADDITION TO MEETINGS.

Asked how UZ could reduce the high teacher student ratios, one of the responses was that there was need to 'increase the number of lecturers and the number of students that are enrolled here' (T3).



## 6. DISCUSSION OF THE RESOURCE RELATED FACTORS

The study focused on resource related factors that influenced quality of teaching and learning at UZ. A case study with qualitative data collection method was used to study the phenomenon ‘quality of teaching and learning’. Ten chairpersons of departments at UZ and ten academics participated in the study through interviews while forty-five students participated in ten focus groups. In this chapter the results are discussed with reference to the analytical framework that incorporates the RDT and related literature to answer the research questions. The relationship of the findings with respect to previous research studies will also be looked at.

A summary on the resource related factors that critically influenced teaching and learning at UZ as well as options that arose from participants are summarized in Figure 5 below:

**Research sub-questions    Resource related factors**

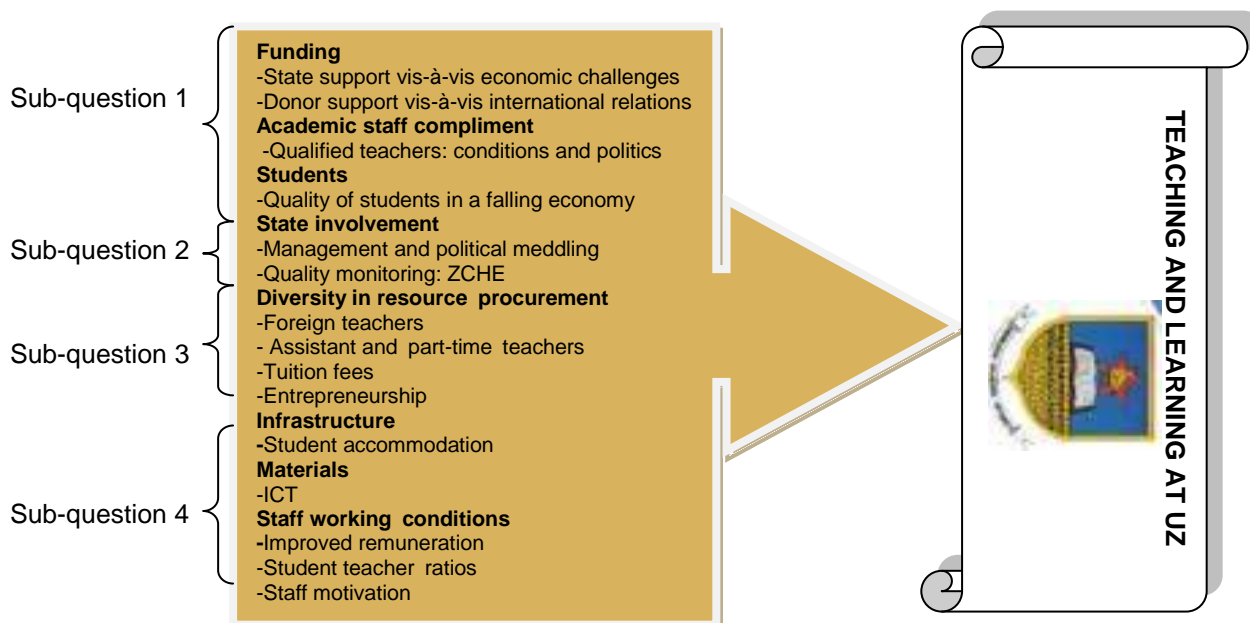


Figure 7: Factors that critically influenced quality of teaching and learning at the UZ

### 6.1 Available resources to UZ

#### 6.1.1 Funding

The RDT emphasized that organizations such as universities need resources (which include financial resources) to survive and it is the environment that provides such resources (Davis & Cobb, 2010). Findings showed that UZ largely looked up to the government for its

sustenance. Just as Altbach and Forest (2006) postulated, UZ saw the state as having the responsibility of funding HE. However findings showed that UZ received budgetary that could not sustain the institution. Funding from the government had remarkably dwindled. State support had largely declined due to negative economic growth that had bedevilled the country over the years. To an extent this finding vindicated that of Johnstone (2004) that there was a global decline in support for HE due to shrinking economies. However, since distribution of resource support was not part of this study interest, it would have been a matter of resource distribution at UZ with those that participated in the study getting less, which is an internal matter that was not asked! Internal resource allocation to department may have an impact on quality of teaching and learning.

Although UZ also looked up to the tuition fees, philanthropists and foreign donors (in some departments) as options for funding these had equally become unpredictable sources in the environment in addition to uncertainty (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Donor funding at UZ had also declined drastically partly due to strained relations between Zimbabwe and the international community. Additionally, tuition fees had become unreliable as most students could not afford to pay due to the economic hardships. RDT therefore predicted an organization-environment relationship with regards to the flow of resources in a normal environment. Situations when countries are literally in an economic meltdown such as Zimbabwe went a bit beyond the RDT prescription.

### **6.1.2 Academic staff compliment**

The RDT stressed that the availability of members of staff such as academics is crucial for the survival of an organization such as a university as ‘who to hire’ matters (Salancik, 1979 in Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003:xii). UZ faced a general shortage of well qualified academics in most departments just as McGregor (2009) found that there was a critical shortage of qualified staff throughout universities in SADC due to poor working conditions. Brain drain was the main cause of the shortage of academics at UZ due to unattractive and ever deteriorating working conditions. This finding confirmed previous research by Manyukwe (2008) who noted a mass exodus of academics in Zimbabwe due to plummeting standards. Research by Enders (2007) also revealed that there was insufficient academic staff in developing countries. There was an economic downward spiral in Zimbabwe at the time of this study to an extent that availing resources that could improve the working conditions could become problematic and uncertain (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). The economic turmoil was



characterized by an extraordinarily high inflation rate with almost non-existent external support while political persecution was rife in the country forcing academics to seek employment elsewhere. One would justify academics who sought alternatives since the resources had become undependable (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003) therefore they opted to seek employment as well as protection from political persecution elsewhere within the region and beyond. Low salaries had negatively impacted the academic profession in addition to losing its reputation (Balbachevsky and Quinteiro, 2002; Enders, 2001).

Although UZ faced a shortage of academics with most of them having moved into the diaspora, some personnel with relevant qualifications were still available within the country but they shunned employment at the UZ due to unattractive working conditions. There were decreased numbers of individuals who answered to the call to join the academic profession (Clark, 2004) or who could opt to become full-time academic appointees (Enders, 2007). It may be justified that some qualified individuals with relevant qualifications would prefer to see certain conditions met, such as improved working conditions, before they joined a HEI like UZ (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003:259). Additionally, academics would naturally avoid volatile political environments.

### **6.1.3 Students**

Students make part of the human resources that critically influenced the quality of teaching and learning at UZ. Some students showed signs of unpreparedness for HE. For most students at the UZ, absenteeism from lectures was a common phenomenon to an extent that some lectures had to be re-scheduled or cancelled altogether. The fact that one participant addressed this issue with a high pitched voice could illustrate that absences from lectures could be one of the idiosyncrasies of some UZ students. To an extent, such behavior could reflect non commitment to learning by some students. It could imply less satisfaction with the quality of teaching and learning at UZ. The UZ students' behavior could also confirm the research findings by Dell (2009) which revealed that in South Africa some universities enrolled students that were unprepared for HE. The behaviour of absenteeism from lectures by students could be attributed to their academic unpreparedness for HE and lack of proper selection of students into the institution (World Bank, 2000). Alternatively this could be regarded as lack of motivation in students who enrolled at the UZ. Such behaviour could result in failures to complete course contents in various programmes. However, in Zimbabwe other factors could contribute to the students' attitudes towards HE. Since findings revealed that some students were in dire economic situation which even forced some female students

into prostitution to augment their economic needs, this could contribute to frequent absence from lectures. Although the absences from lectures should not be condoned, some absences from lectures could be regarded as the panacea to the economic quagmire that most students were entangled in. The resource starved environment that prevailed at UZ was capable of demotivating some students.

#### **6.1.4 Teaching and learning materials**

Availability of adequate and relevant books made up part of the resources that were crucial in the enhancement of quality in teaching and learning at UZ. Yet findings in this study revealed that these were inadequate in most of the departments. This finding confirmed that of the World Bank (2000) which found that most universities in Africa had few resources like libraries. In most departments students scrambled for the few books that were available. It was also not uncommon for most students to fail to get recommended books. These were unavailable in the campus or bookshops, while other books were in short supply making it almost impossible to obtain them at the university. To further aggravate the situation the library was regarded as poorly stocked. This could result in students failing to access books that could subsequently enhance quality in activities such as written assignments and examinations while teachers could probably fail to make adequate preparations for lectures. All this could have a negative impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

Challenges involving quality of teaching and learning at UZ were rooted in a lack of resources (World Bank, 2000). The unavailability of adequate and relevant books at UZ was so dire that some students removed pages from some of the books once they got hold of them. Therefore there could have been a correlation between shortages of teaching and learning materials and the unpalatable student behaviour. While the resources were scarce at UZ, the students' behavior exacerbated the situation. Such behaviour could also show the calibre of students that UZ enrolled students with short term memories that did not consider the needs of the future UZ students. This could also demonstrate how UZ failed to educate the student as a whole, a student who should be socially fit after graduation, in addition to acquiring the degree qualifications. This finding also revealed how short supply of resources was capable of inculcating unbecoming behaviours in individuals such as students.

## **6.2 State regulation**

### **6.2.1 UZ management**

Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) asserted that the background of individuals who occupied posts in organizations mattered. In this study the findings show that the majority of department chairpersons and teachers believed that most individuals who were in the administrative structures of the university were political appointees rather than professionals that were appointed on merit. While Askling and Stensaker (2002) viewed academic leaders as individuals who must be capable of directing the institution to remain on course to achieve its primary goals political appointees would most likely impact negatively on teaching and learning. When leaders achieve posts with some political influence, it can be presumed that they may not act in the interests of the institution due to fear of disappointing those who appointed or influenced their appointment. This may imply compromising the quality of teaching and learning in the university. In fact Manion (1985) found out that leaders who achieve posts without the consideration of merit usually fail to follow the dictates of their conscience due to the fear of being demoted, transferred or even losing employment altogether. That could have been the case with the UZ leadership if the allegations held any grain of truth. However, it should also be noted that at the time of this study Zimbabwe was embroiled in political turmoil. Interference in appointments of individuals into the administrative positions could be inevitable since the UZ had always been viewed as one of the bedrocks of opposition politics.

Zeilig (2008) found that university students in Zimbabwe considered themselves as the voice of the voiceless. To the government, individuals who could suppress student activism or political involvement could have been the best appointees in the UZ management. Inasmuch as state interference cannot be condoned in management issues at the UZ it could compromise the quality of teaching and learning. Suppression of opposition politics as expressed at the UZ could be the justification for state interference thereby making it difficult for the UZ management to shrug off any external meddling. Alternatively, it should be noted that Zimbabwe was highly polarized politically at the time of this study hence it could be possible that allegations that the UZ leadership was made up of political appointees could be mere allegations by those who participated in this study.

## **6.2.2 HE quality monitoring**

As expected, the state enforced quality in teaching and learning through the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZCHE) whose mandate was partly to ensure that quality HE prevailed in higher institutions of learning. Although the Zimbabwe government faced a myriad of economic challenges characterized by reduced budgetary support for HEIs which included UZ, the state put itself in a position of influence at UZ as an organization, as advocated in RDT (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). The government monitored quality at UZ through the ZCHE. However it has to be noted that ZCHE was highly perceived as generally a useless HE quality monitor which never carried out its mandate except for the approval of establishment of HEIs! Zimbabwe economically faced a lot of challenges. If budgetary support for HE had fallen in real terms, one would be justified to suspect that the ZCHE lacked enough budgetary support from the state to carry out its mandate too. Also ZCHE monitoring quality in teaching and learning at UZ, an institution that was resource starved, would not have been an easy task. UZ needed the capacity to maintain quality in teaching and learning. Alternatively, in a country that was so politically polarized, political orientation of individuals may have been considered rather than merit in the appointment of members of ZCHE. This must have resulted in having a monitoring board composed of individuals with little or no knowledge of ensuring quality in teaching and learning at UZ.

## **6.3 UZ adaptation**

### **6.3.1 Diversity in resource procurement**

Despite the general shortage of qualified academic staff, some departments at UZ survived by having external organizational links as postulated in the RDT. Some departments had visiting academics from foreign universities who subsequently augmented those at the UZ. Such staff mobility and exchanges could assist both students and teachers to be exposed to other approaches (Enders, 2007) thereby enhancing the internationalization of teaching and learning. Teachers from foreign universities could bring in other methods and approaches to teaching and learning to some departments. The situation was different in other departments at UZ as they failed to attract academics from foreign universities due to various potential reasons. It could be due to some restrictions on the movement of teachers within the SADC region which is similar to Europe's ERASMUS scheme (McGregor, 2009). At the time of this study, Zimbabwe still faced political polarization in addition to economic quagmire which could result in some departments failing to attract foreign academics. Academics will

normally shun harsh conditions, particularly those that would put their lives at risk. The politics of the day cannot be dismissed in its entirety. In situations where there is persecution of those who are perceived as critics or enemies of the state, academics will naturally shun such volatile environments. In view of the political situation in Zimbabwe at the time of this study, the academia would have been construed as an ivory tower that sought to criticize the government but were unwilling to proffer any solutions. Hence foreign academics probably feared for their safety if they joined UZ.

Altbach (2009) perceived the academics as having a crucial role since ‘no university can achieve success without a well qualified academic profession’ and ‘neither an impressive ...curriculum will produce good results without great professors’. To a large extent this emphasized the importance of qualified teachers in a university for it to achieve quality in teaching and learning. While the quality of academics that a university engages matters, at the UZ there existed a critical shortage of qualified academics. Faced by a shortage of qualified teachers UZ sought alternatives. Findings show that it was not uncommon to find that in some departments, master students taught most courses. In theory the master students were regarded as assistant lecturers yet they did not play the assistantship role since most of them carried full loads, roles that qualified academics were supposed to play. The cause of the academics offloading tasks on the master students cum teachers could have been as a result of ‘academic professionals taking second jobs ... , thereby making them less available to students’ (Bloom & Rosovsky, 2007:453) putting much of the burden on the ‘assistant lecturers’. Engaging master students could have been an intervention strategy in the face of an environment that had become turbulent (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003) despite the engagement of individuals who lacked relevant qualifications. However, such a stopgap measure (employment of master students) could mean that students who, most probably, struggled with their own studies. To an extent the requirement for them to devote much of their time to teach other students could ultimately translate to a very high likelihood of poor teaching and learning in some courses. The intervention strategy to alleviate the shortage of academics confirmed the finding by McGregor (2009) that in the SADC region (in which UZ is located, considering Zimbabwe belongs to SADC) there was a critical shortage of staff throughout universities. Despite the daunting task that the master students cum teachers faced, it may have to be appreciated that they got staff development programmes (SDP) which could enhance their scholarly approach to teaching (D’Andrea & Gosling, 2005) meaning that some could possibly provide quality or improved teaching and learning. Nevertheless SDP would most likely not equip them with the

relevant teaching strategies to match qualified academics although they could act as plug-ins in the desperate situations. It also has to be noted that some of the master students who also taught some courses most probably struggled with their own studies hence possibly took a lackadaisical approach to any SDP. It should be noted that at the time of this study Zimbabwe faced various challenges which included brain drain. Engaging the under-qualified or unqualified individuals as teachers and also to develop their skills was perhaps a way of injecting some form of a lifeline into HE at UZ. The situation was desperate and hence called for desperate measures, one of which could have been the employment of master students! Just as the RDT encourages organization to think of alternatives in the face of challenges such as in terms of human resource shortages, UZ was at least trying to cope with the difficult situations of manpower shortages albeit these had their own shortfalls. To some extent the UZ was attempting to negotiate its position to come up with some strategies in the face of constraints as advised by Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) by engaging under-qualified teachers such as master students to fill up the gaps left by the shortage of qualified staff,.

Instead of relying on the flow of financial resources which had realistically dwindled (e.g. reduced state and donor funding), UZ had since mainly turned to tuition fees as a key alternative to keep it afloat. This showed how organizations are able to find alternative ways from the environment in order to survive (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003). At the same time this showed that UZ had adopted the notion that the burden of HE had to be shared between the taxpayer and the recipients (students) (Eicher & Chevailier, 2002) whereby those who benefited had at least to share the costs (Johnstone, 2003). Unfortunately this form of resource acquisition (tuition fees) had become 'problematic and uncertain' (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003:258) to a large extent. Most of the students to whom UZ relied upon for payment of the tuition fees could not afford the amounts that the institution charged due to tough economic constraints that affected the larger part of the population, thus vindicating the assertion of the RDT that organizations faced constraints from the environment they relied upon. To most students the tuition fees that UZ charged were beyond their ability to pay. One student participant addressed the tuition fee issue with a high pitched voice which could imply that the tuition fees that UZ charged were just beyond the affordability of most students. This finding was similar to that by Katema (2006) that HEIs in Zimbabwe charged astronomical fees considering that most students faced challenges in meeting their payment obligations. Such a situation could force some students to cancel their studies due to inability to pay tuition fees. Consequently, those from strong economic backgrounds would ultimately enrol

on the basis of their ability to pay the required tuition fees. Such a trend could also lead to the enrolment of students who, under normal circumstances, would not qualify. This could lead to a situation which might compromise the quality of teaching and learning. Likewise, a university would need some form of funding to carry out its mandate. One way to achieve this involves charging tuition fees. Otherwise materials that are required for quality teaching and learning may be difficult to procure. In the absence of materials academics would neither effectively teach nor do students effectively learn.

Study results showed that some departments and UZ at large were involved in some entrepreneurial activities to augment the few resources that were at their disposal. UZ, through the Faculty of Agricultural was involved in some farming activities while some departments sold various items. This confirmed the notion that universities occasionally have to attempt to negotiate their positions within their constraints and think of strategies to overcome these constraints (Pfeffer, 1972 in Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). UZ and some of its departments attempted to do just that while they most likely reduced resource dependencies in the process. However, it has to be noted that these cited options most likely brought insignificant positive results given that in recent years Zimbabwe had become a drought prone country whereby the individual purchasing power had drastically reduced due to the economic challenges. Agricultural activities and other entrepreneurial activities could bring little relief to the flow of additional resources for the improvement of quality of teaching and learning at UZ although such attempts have to be commended.

## **6.4 Available options to UZ**

### **6.4.1 Staff working conditions**

Entwistle (2000) postulated that the enhancement of quality in teaching and learning is also dependent on the staff working conditions. Improved working conditions for the UZ could undoubtedly be contributory to improved quality of teaching and learning. The study revealed that UZ teachers worked under challenging conditions. For instance due to the economic abyss that prevailed in the country at the time of the study, academics had to supplement the meagre salaries they earned. Some of them got involved in some form of entrepreneurial activities such as selling agricultural produce within the institution and during working hours. This means that some teachers could have been preoccupied with their immediate survival other than teaching and learning. This could confirm that 'salary levels and other issues

related to remuneration have an impact on the academic profession' (Enders, 2007:14) while the entrepreneurial activities which the RDT encouraged impacted negatively on the status and reputation of the academics (Enders, 1999). Such activities within UZ helped to understand the behaviour of individuals in organizations when they fail to accumulate and access resources as suggested by Pfeffer and Salancik (2003). Marquis (2002) asserted that as academics try to augment their salaries, their primary role of teaching and learning in institutions is diverted. When the academics are faced by situations whereby they have to augment their salaries through activities that are divorced from teaching and learning, then their engagement to teaching and learning may be compromised too. There would also be a higher probability that they could make themselves 'less available to students' (Bloom & Rosovsky, 2007:453).

The challenges in working conditions for teachers at UZ could be reflected in the teachers' failure to give students feedback on assignments in good time as findings showed. It was revealed that feedback on some assignments given to students was available after some of them had totally forgotten about them even though students have to 'receive feedback on their progress from teachers' on time (D'Andrea & Gosling, 2005:95). Late feedback at UZ could be attributed to the ballooning enrolment as the demand for HE globally had risen to around 3% (Eicher & Chevillier, 2002). High student enrolments may have translated to the teachers' need for more time to provide feedback to students (see Figures 2 & 3 for enrolment trends in Zimbabwe). As earlier discussed, UZ also faced a shortage of academics which had led to high teacher student ratio. Under such circumstances it could be conceivable that the few available teachers at UZ bore inevitable work pressure to the extent that they needed more time to provide the feedback to students, thereby possibly compromising the quality of teaching and learning at the HEI. All the same late feedback could impact negatively on the students' eagerness to be involved in teaching and learning activities while it could possibly demotivated some of the students.

The contribution of student enrolment in any HEI to the quality of teaching and learning cannot be underestimated given that it has a bearing on the teachers' working conditions. While student teacher ratio at UZ was very high to the extent that one teacher taught up to two hundred students in a lecture, this confirmed observations by Bloom, Canning and Chan (2005) that in Mauritania overcrowding was rife while the situation at UZ resembled just that. Teachers found it difficult to teach the overcrowded classrooms while students complained of



the lack of effective interaction with their teachers which was inevitable under the circumstances. Such circumstances impacted on the timely feedback on students' work considering that teachers had to attend to a lot of work which needed prolonged time. In addition to this, high student teacher ratios could reduce student progress, because there could be reduced student teacher interaction which undoubtedly should be a prerequisite for effective teaching and learning (D'Andrea & Gosling, 2005). Furthermore, UZ could not raise its teaching staff complement which was unrealistically low. The institution faced very little leeway to increase the number of teachers since it faced economic challenges, poor working conditions and volatile political environment which possibly inhibited the recruitment of additional staff. Thus UZ had to make do with what was within its reach- high teacher student ratios! As one of the public institutions, UZ attracted students from poor economic backgrounds who could not afford enrolling in private universities where tuition fee charges were higher. With increased demand for HE due to increased chances of employment and rate of return through higher wages after attaining university degrees (Branson, Leibbrandt & Zuze, 2009) increased enrolment pressure at UZ would inevitably lead to a surmountable task of maintaining a realistic teacher student ratio. Most students opted for UZ, an institution where the tuition fees were reasonably lower and affordable in addition to its high reputation within the country and region.

RDT regards the motivation of the participants in running the organization to ensure that the organization's survives (Davis & Cobb, 2010). The state attempted to improve the welfare and working conditions of the academics by offering incentives such as duty free importation of vehicles. Such an intervention strategy could induce some motivational effect in the academics. However in a declining economy such an incentive could be regarded as a drop into the ocean, since there were already poor working conditions at UZ, as was found within the SADC region (Manyukwe, 2008). Given that the university teachers' received paltry salaries, many of the intended beneficiary could fail to access such incentives for reasons such as corruption and nepotism. In addition to that, with low salaries, few would easily view purchasing of vehicles as an unnecessary luxury while they would focus on getting the basic necessities of life instead.

This study revealed that some academics at UZ were a committed group working under adverse conditions characterized by, for instance, low remuneration and lack of teaching and learning materials. This may imply that they sacrificed some of their meagre incomes to

procure some teaching and learning materials for their upcoming lectures. For instance, some teachers used their own financial resources to make photocopies for forthcoming lessons. To this regard, some UZ academics showed that although inadequate remuneration was part of the resources that had the capability of endangering quality of teaching and learning as alluded to by the RDT, there were some academics who made up a 'committed academic profession' (Altbach, 2009). Thus this study partly revealed that increased remuneration was not all that could motivate academics to show commitment to their work. Some participants showered the UZ academics with praise; which could mean that some teachers at UZ cared about their students (D'Andrea & Gosling, 2005). This could be regarded as a sign of caring for the students while they attempted to add value to their lectures at their own cost. However one could view the academics' actions in the context of the situation that prevailed in Zimbabwe at the time of the study. It has to be noted that it was revealed that the political and economic situation was improving at the time of this study as reflected in the positive GDP real growth rate (+3.7%) in the country. Such improvement could have had a motivational effect on the academics as they became optimistic about improved working conditions. It also has to be noted that the economy was still performing poorly with a soaring unemployment rate of up to 90% and mounting poverty levels in the country. Therefore some of teachers' form of commitment to work could be regarded as actions of individuals who had no other alternatives in the face of the high unemployment rate that existed in the country. Seeking alternative employment could be an uphill task so they had to keep what they had. Also for any poor delivery of lectures; the blame would squarely be put on their shoulders by the students.

One could justifiably argue that despite the constraints that UZ academics faced, they had to think of the strategies to overcome these constraints as advised by Pfeffer and Salancik (2003). Thus spending the little they had could be viewed as a contribution towards their reputation as good teachers! Although one could feel that increased remuneration was not all that could exclusively motivate teachers to work more at UZ such a scenario could never be condoned since Enders (2007:14) asserted that 'salary levels and other issues related to remuneration have an impact on the academic profession'.

With very low salaries teachers could be demotivated, get a feeling of status loss and reputation (Enders, 1999) with a possibility of some academics losing their commitment towards the academic profession (Albach, 2009) thereby causing a possible failure to

approach teaching and learning with the zeal that could enhance quality in teaching and learning. Alternatively low salaries could lead to brain drain leaving a void which could consequently be filled by individuals, who were unqualified or under-qualified, a scenario that could cause compromise on quality in teaching and learning. The solution could be that UZ teachers needed to be paid wages that were commensurate with their qualifications and equal in value to their counterparts at least in the region or else they would leave in droves. The UZ teachers' patience needed not be drawn above the limit as eventually the few available teachers were also capable of getting attracted to other HEIs in the country, region and beyond. Job stay-away which could be regarded as a symptom of disgruntlement could end up being opted for leading to disruption of teaching and learning. The working conditions needed improvement in order to encourage the staff to approach teaching and learning in a manner that could enhance quality in teaching and learning.

#### **6.4.2 Infrastructural resources**

The RDT stressed the need for critical resources for an organization to survive. Infrastructure such as classroom space and student housing could be regarded as some of the critical resources. Findings in this study showed that UZ faced some challenges in infrastructural resources. Some infrastructure at UZ had deteriorated, was in need of renovation or was inadequate. It was revealed that students faced accommodations problems owing to students hostels being closed, allegedly due to their poor state. Students had to commute to campus for lectures. Given the challenges that were faced in the transport system in the capital Harare, it is most likely that some students routinely came late for lectures while some would probably cancel attending lectures to save money. Both coming late for lectures or missing some would mean losing some information that could be vital in the teaching and learning processes such as connecting taught concepts. The unavailability of student accommodation vindicated the assertion of the World Bank (2000) that there were buildings (e.g. student hotels in the case of UZ) that are rarely open in some developing countries. At UZ, student accommodation was available and only needed strategies for reopening them.

Duncanson, Volpe and Achilles (2009) argued that classroom space enhances organization and opportunities for student learning. However the study revealed that some departments faced a shortage of classroom space which sometimes resulted in mix-ups of classes meaning that scheduling of classes had become a major challenge too. It was commonplace for teachers and students to spend time locating vacant classrooms. Such inconveniences had the

capability of contributing to loss of teaching and learning time which was another resource that could be regarded as irretrievable because students and teachers looked for vacant classrooms while time ticked away. This could affect the completion of prescribed course content. At times vacant classes could be unavailable leading to some lectures being held in cramped rooms which were intended to be offices. Such environments could compromise the quality of teaching and learning as crowded rooms could result in subjecting participants to high temperatures which could negatively affect the teaching and learning processes as participants could feel uncomfortable. The problem of classroom space at UZ justified McGregor (2009) who found that in most HEIs student numbers had increased while severe infrastructure constraints were faced. The situation resembled that of Mauritania where HEIs were generally overcrowded (Bloom, Canning & Chan, 2005). Instead of just relying on the limited classroom space available at UZ campus it was prudent that the institution resorted to use of other facilities such as the Parirenyatwa Hospital for medical students.

### **6.4.3 Materials**

Findings showed that teaching and learning materials were a great challenge at UZ. Since Laurillard (2000) propounds that it is on internet that best teachers can be gotten, UZ had resorted to ICT. However, access to internet was a nightmare to most student and teacher population. There were inadequate machines in relation to the student enrolment at the institution while the few machines that were available in some departments were either not functioning or infected by viruses. This is despite that internet made part of the technologies that complemented the usual ways of teaching and learning (Bloom & Rosovsky, 2007; Laurillard, 2000). These were some of the important albeit scarce resources mentioned in the RDT. Challenges in ICT provisions at UZ vindicated findings by McGregor (2009) who found that universities in the SADC region continued to experience serious gaps and constraints in their ICT infrastructure. In some departments where some internet could be accessed, lack of electricity to power the machines was common due to load shedding. The World Bank (2002) emphasized the importance of electricity as global technologies relied on this for sharing information. Lack of proper ICT infrastructure resulted in teachers and students having inadequate opportunities to browse the internet so as to get important and relevant knowledge. While some teachers and students ended up accessing the internet in internet cafes that undoubtedly overstretched their financial resources in a hyperinflationary environment with a likelihood of discarding internet browsing altogether. So, access to

internet in cafes could result in the students and teachers failing to exhaust their searches for knowledge through internet altogether. The situation at UZ confirmed the findings by McGregor (2009) that in SADC, to which Zimbabwe belongs, there were constraints in ICT infrastructure or that access to computers was still low. While ICT at UZ could be regarded as poor this could also show a difficulty in shifting from the traditional and formal institutional type of teaching to the option of technology facilitated learning as Skilbeck (2001) found in a study in Ireland.

Poor access to the internet at UZ could also be understood in the context of the economic situation that prevailed at the time of this study. Therefore, to some extent, purchasing of computers and even their maintenance could be regarded as one of the luxuries that the institution could not afford in the face of other challenges such as the procurement of teaching and learning materials. This could nonetheless be a justification of an underestimation of the importance of ICT in the enhancement of quality of teaching and learning. If the world has become such a global village through the internet, and if UZ recognized the enhancement of quality in teaching and learning through access to internet, then teachers and students needed to be up to date with information through its provision and maintenance. Bloom and Rosovsky (2007:449) asserted that ‘information and communication technologies have the potential to facilitate communication among students, teachers...’ too. Increased budget for the improvement of ICT would go long way in alleviating the dire material resource situation at UZ.



## **7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Conclusion and recommendations for this study were drawn in relation to the research question that regarded the resource related factors which have influenced quality of teaching and learning at UZ guided by four sub-questions: What resources are available to the University of Zimbabwe to maintain and/or enhance quality of teaching and learning? To what extent does the governmental regulatory framework influencing quality of teaching and learning at University of Zimbabwe? How does the University of Zimbabwe adapt to the current resource situation? and What strategic options are available to the UZ to acquire critical resources to improve the quality of teaching and learning? Quality of teaching and learning at UZ was critically influenced by the following factors: funding, academic staff compliment, students, infrastructure, state involvement, diversity in resource procurement, materials, and the staff working conditions.

### **7.1 Conclusion**

#### **7.1.1 Reflection on the factors**

Just as the RDT prescribed that the environment provides resources that can sustain organizations, UZ had some resources at its disposal to enhance and/or maintain quality of teaching and learning at the institution. The resource situation at UZ mirrored the situation that prevailed in the environment – a situation clogged by challenges. UZ had diminished sources of resources. This was prompted mainly by a plethora of economic and political challenges in the country. The challenges partly led to, for instance, brain drain with most qualified staff leaving and seeking other jobs in the region and beyond. A stopgap measure for UZ involved opting for master students to teach in the university. There were also a few foreign teachers who trickled into some of the departments thereby alleviating the academic staff shortage at UZ. With the reduced flow of funding from various sources, UZ had resorted to other options. The institution was involved in commercial agricultural activities to augment its financial resource base. UZ raised funds by engagement in income generating projects at some departmental levels while it also relied mainly on tuition fees to keep itself afloat in the face of dwindling state, donor and philanthropic support.

The state played a role the UZ in an effort to ensure quality in teaching and learning through ZCHE, which monitored the quality of teaching and learning at UZ and other HEIs. Sadly, this body had not started carrying out its mandate in full yet except for approval of setting up of HEIs in the country. The state also involved itself in the appointment of UZ management through influencing some appointments. Unfortunately some individuals ended up being appointed for the administrative roles through some political influence at the expense of merit with the probability of endangering quality in teaching and learning at UZ. HEIs were generally regarded as the bedrock of opposition politics hence the state interfered even in the appointment of individuals to leadership positions.

Other options that UZ had to enhance quality in teaching and learning involved the establishment of constituent campuses in different centres of Harare and within the country so as to reduce pressure from the limited classroom space at the main UZ campus. The institution still had to reopen the student accommodation halls in order to reduce costs and travelling time for students, since this interrupted with time for teaching and learning.

### **7.1.2 Effectiveness of RDT in the study**

The RDT remained appropriate for the study as it centred on how organizations such UZ acquired resources from the environment, which was a central theme of this study. Although UZ was a unique case because it was located in a highly volatile country (Zimbabwe) in terms of economics and politics, RDT was still a relevant theory as it stressed the value of resource support for an organization. Beside the challenges that UZ faced, some resource flowed into the institution making RDT relevant to analyze the case. However material and human resources are not the only prerequisites that can guarantee quality in teaching and learning. RDT negated other factors such the socio-political ones which dominated in the UZ scenario. The unstable environment rendered the RDT prescriptions less effective to some extent as UZ's dependence on the environment was largely diminished. To UZ the environment largely became a less-supportive one. Although RDT advises institutions to seek options to obtain resources, UZ was left with a little room to maneuver due to the unstable political and economic situation in the country. This reduced the wholesome usefulness of RDT to UZ as a case. The UZ situation went beyond RDT prescriptions as dependence on the environment brought about very insignificant resource inflows.



## **7.2 Recommendations**

### **7.2.1 Resources issue at UZ**

While the study showed that UZ faced a myriad of challenges in resource accumulation due to the existence of an almost none supportive environment, it would be ideal for the institution to make a wise use of what was available. Prioritizing importance of resources that could improve quality of teaching and learning could enable pooling of the meagre resources and directing them towards areas of importance. UZ could expect adequate resource support from the environment but the necessary resources were in short supply. It would be advisable to use the available resources to improve the academics working conditions before focusing on other materials without underestimating their importance. Improved working conditions would likely attract more academics to UZ.

The next priority could be making books available in the university. These would supplement the academics' effort in enhancing quality in teaching and learning. Use of the few resources to procure books would give students access to alternative sources of information other than the one given by the academics. Other resources that UZ needed could also be considered with improved inflow of resources as adequate academic staff members and the books would not be the panacea to improve quality of teaching and learning at the institution.

### **7.2.2 Macro economic and political policies**

Challenges in resource availability at UZ needed the address of issues at a macro level. The challenges that the institution faced could be alleviated with change in the economic and political direction at the state level. New ideas were needed to pull the country out of the economic malaise. The government needed to set its economic priorities right. Despite the existence of a moribund economy HE needed to be treated as equally an essential (if not more essential) as others like Home Affairs and Defence where the allocation of the national fiscus have always been channeled.

Additionally freedoms had to be respected in the country. There was high political polarization in the country which impeded basic academic freedom at UZ. Individuals, including academics, were easily labeled enemies of the state just by expressing contrary views. Academic freedom and autonomy at UZ and other HEIs needed to be respected. The state has to stop its intrusive behavior particularly in matters that were prerogatives of the UZ.

There was also need for a political dispensation that saw Zimbabwe as part of the regional and international community. Unison with the regional and international community could assist in availing resources at UZ, such resources could enhance and maintain the quality of teaching and learning.

### **7.2.3 Further study**

This research study concentrated on resource related factors that influenced teaching and learning at UZ. Some questions remain open for further research. This includes whether the influence that resources had on teaching and learning at UZ were similar at other HEIs in Zimbabwe since the purpose of this study was not generalize the findings. It would also be interesting to explore on other areas that resources had an influence on beside teaching and learning at UZ. Also a need for exploration could be on other none resource related factors that impacted on quality of teaching and learning at UZ. A comparative study of state and private universities regarding the influences of resources on teaching and learning could be interesting too.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: University of Oslo letter to access field of study



**UNIVERSITY OF OSLO**  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Page 1 of 1

To whom it may concern

Department of Education  
P.O. Box 1092 Blindern  
N-0317 Oslo

Date: 17.03.2010

Visiting address:  
Sentralskolevei 7, Hjeltnes Building, 5th floor  
Telephone: +47 22 85 44 75  
Fax: +47 22 85 42 50  
[www.uio.no](http://www.uio.no)

### ASSISTANCE IN THE CONDUCTION OF FIELD-WORK

This is to confirm that the student, Joseph Chidindi, born 15.03.1966, is a second year student in the Master of Philosophy programme in Higher Education at the Department of Education at the University of Oslo, Norway.

In the second year our students are required to write a Master thesis between 50 to 80 pages. This thesis should preferably be based on field studies conducted in countries outside of Norway. The field-work may incorporate interviews with educational practitioners and decision makers, class room observation and documentary analysis. The type of data gathered should of course be discussed with the relevant authorities. Mr. Chidindi's thesis is tentatively titled: "Focus on quality issues on teaching and learning. The case of the University of Zimbabwe." It is our hope that the work produced by the student will not only benefit him in his academic career but also be of use in the future.

Joseph Chidindi will be conducting his field work in Zimbabwe during the months of March-April 2010. We kindly ask you to give him all possible assistance during his field-work in Zimbabwe.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding the programme of this student.

Best regards,

Kristi Barcus  
Senior Executive Officer  
+47 22 85 53 56



UNIVERSITY OF OSLO  
Department of Education  
Box 1092 Blindern  
N-0317 Oslo



## Appendix 2: Focus group interview guide for students

**Date of interview**

**Time**

### **Introduction**

- Greetings and establishment of rapport
- Address of confidentiality issues
- Summary of purpose of study and issues raised by informants

### **Self introductory by informants**

Brief introductions by informants and interviewee.

Stress of voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity.

### **Motivations**

1. First, what made you got interest to study in this university?
2. How do you value your current studies? (activities, courses, groups, educational experiences)
3. Can you account for the progress you have you had so far in your studies? (Skills, knowledge gained, courses accomplished etc.)

### **The academic staff**

1. What perceptions do you hold about the teachers at UZ?
2. What do you think are the factors that influence your teachers in their approach to teaching and learning?
3. To what extent the teachers in this university satisfy you in their approach to teaching and learning?
4. What do you think about the teacher student ratio? What challenges are you facing as students?

### **Resources**

1. How are you financing your education at UZ?
2. What challenges are you facing? How are the challenges impacting on your involvement in teaching and learning?
3. How do rate government involvement in your education?
4. To what extent are you satisfied with the infrastructure in this university?
5. What views do you hold on teaching and learning resources that are available?

### **Suggestions**

What suggestions do you have that could improve or maintain teaching and learning in this university?

### **6. Concluding remarks**

Thanking the interviewee and reassuring confidentiality



## **Appendix 2: Interview guide for teachers/department chairpersons**

**Date of interview**

**Time**

### **Introduction**

- Greetings and establishment of rapport
- Address of confidentiality issues
- Summary of purpose of study and discussion of any issues raised by participant(s)

### **Background information**

Self introduction by informant and interviewee.

Stress of voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity.

### **State involvement**

1. How do you view the government role in the provision of higher education?
2. What are your views on government participation in the running of the University of Zimbabwe? How about in the financing of UZ?
3. How would you describe the insurance and monitoring of quality at UZ by the government?

### **Staff and working conditions**

1. In your department, what views do you hold about the available teachers in relation to work demands?
2. What do you think about your working conditions?
3. What views do you hold about the students teacher ratios in this university?
4. What perceptions do you hold about the quality of students you enroll?
5. To what extent do your students fully participate in teaching and learning activities?

### **Material resources**

1. How would you comment the availability of teaching and learning materials at UZ?
2. How are you augmenting the available resources in your department and institution?
3. What views do you hold about information and communication technology in this university?
4. What comments do you hold on the curriculum you have in the department?

### **Physical environment**

1. What perceptions and opinions do you hold about classroom availability at UZ?
2. What other physical factors are influencing the quality of teaching and learning and in what way do they do so?

### **Suggestions**

What would you consider as alternatives to improve teaching and learning in this university?

### **Concluding remarks**

Thanking the interviewee and reassuring confidentiality.